E. B. Walsworth

E. B. Walsworth

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.
GIFT OF
Mrs. SARAH P. WALSWORTH.
Received October, 1894.
Accessions No. 58116 . *Class No.* .....

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/memoriesofgennes00macdrich

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF
CALIFORNIA.

GENNESARET

(IN THE TIME OF OUR LORD.)

Lebanon
Valley of Doves. Safed.
Mount of Beatitudes (Hattin).
Capernaum.
Plain of Gennesaret.
MAGDALA.
TIBERIAS.
Mount Hermon.
Bethsaida (Julias).
GADARA

MEMORIES

OF

GENNESARET.

BY THE

REV. JOHN R. MACDUFF,

AUTHOR OF "MORNING AND NIGHT WATCHES," "WORDS OF JESUS," "MIND OF JESUS," "FOOTSTEPS OF ST. PAUL" "EVENING INCENSE," "WOODCUTTER OF LEBANON," GREAT JOURNEY," "MEMORIES OF BETHANY," "FAMILY PRAYERS," ETC.

NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,
No. 530 BROADWAY.
1859.

BT303
M3

58116

TO

THE MEMORY OF

A BELOVED ONLY SON,

WITH WHOSE LATTER DAYS

NOT A FEW OF THESE PAGES

ARE

TENDERLY ASSOCIATED.

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

PREFACE.

THE graphic description of "GENNESARET" and "The Land of GENNESARET," in Mr Stanley's recent work, "*Sinai and Palestine*," suggested the following pages.

It occurred to the Author that, as in a previous volume (MEMORIES OF BETHANY), he might group together with advantage the varied scenes which give an undying interest to the Shores of *Tiberias*, —interweaving the Scriptural references to a region which, as a sanctuary of holy thought, will yield in interest to no other in sacred story.

An acknowledgment has been made in foot-notes of any obligations he has been under to the works and thoughts of others. For topographical details in the first and several other chapters, he has been indebted to Mr Stanley's vivid delineations; also, in the course of Exposition, to the admirable and sug-

gestive Treatises of Trench and Alford in our own country, and to the two most trustworthy and gifted masters in "The Fatherland of Thought," Stier and Olshausen.

In committing these pages to the press, the Writer has fulfilled the wishes of many friends, who desired for themes of ordinary Sabbath ministration a more permanent form. To such they may serve as the *Souvenir* of a period on which he will ever dwell with hallowed and grateful emotion.

Deeply conscious how inadequately he has treated a great and fascinating subject, he nevertheless sends forth his Volume with earnest prayer that the Great Head of the Church may deign to bless this, as He has been already pleased to bless former lowly offerings cast by the same hand into His Treasury.

December 1857.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE
I.	THE SCENE	2
II.	THE HOME	10
II.	THE FISHERMEN	20
IV.	THE CALL AND CONSECRATION	32
V.	THE INCURABLE CURED	50
VI.	THE SOLDIER AND HIS SLAVE	70
VII.	THREE PORTRAITS	92
VIII.	THE SOWER AND THE SEED	114
IX.	THE SOWER AND THE SEED	132
X.	THE STORM ON THE LAKE	150
XI.	THE SPOILER SPOILED	168
XII.	THE ONLY DAUGHTER	190
XIII.	THE LIFE OF SACRIFICE	210
XIV.	THE MIRACULOUS FEAST	230
XV.	THE NIGHT RESCUE	246
XVI.	THE SINKING DISCIPLE	266
XVII.	THE DOOMED CITY	290
XVIII.	HEROISM	312
XIX.	MARY MAGDALENE	326
XX.	THE FEAST ON THE SHORE	342
XXI.	THE TESTIMONY OF LOVE	358
XXII.	THE FAREWELL	372

I.

The Scene.

"What went ye out to see
O'er the rude sandy lea,
Where stately Jordan flows by many a palm,
Or where Gennesaret's wave
Delights the flowers to lave,
That o'er her western slope breathe airs of balm?

All through the summer night,
Those blossoms red and white,
Spread their soft breasts unheeding to the breeze,
Like hermits watching still
Around the sacred hill
Where erst our Saviour watch'd upon his knees."

"The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."—MATT. iv. 15, 16. ISAIAH ix. 1, 2.

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

THE SCENE.

THE researches of modern travellers have made the Shores of GENNESARET well-nigh as familiar to us as those of our own English or Scottish lakes. As we follow in thought the footsteps of our Blessed Lord in a region crowded, above all others in Sacred Story, with imperishable memories, we are enabled to picture the very sky on which He gazed, the hills with their gray and red limestone sides shelving into the water, the sterile mountains losing themselves in the eastern desert where He prayed; the pearly beach, with its creeks and bays, on which the clear limpid waves murmured of old—as they murmur still. We can think of the lilies to which He pointed, as excelling the glories of Solomon—the fowls of heaven, many arrayed in gorgeous plumage, from which, as fed by His Father, He drew a lesson of unswerving trust. We can picture the future Teachers of the world mending their nets, or mooring their boats on its shingle—the Jordan hastening, as to this hour, down to its rocky gorges—the Lebanon range, and the nearer serrated peaks of Safed bounding the northern view—the snowy summit of Hermon, like a hoary giant overlooking all,—perhaps the feature in the varied panorama least changed since the eye of Incarnate Glory fell on its everlasting snows.*

* No attentive reader can have failed to note, that while one of the Evangelists (and that the latest) narrates the incidents connected with the Saviour's history occurring mainly in Jerusalem and Judea, the chief portion of the narrative

The geographical position of the Lake of *Tiberias*, and the relation of the surrounding district to the rest of Palestine, claim a few introductory words, ere we people these with the living characters who invest them with an undying interest. Not more striking was the difference, a hundred years ago, between the Lowlands and Highlands of Scotland or Wales, than was that, in the time of our Lord, between Judea and Galilee. The outward conformation of the two provinces was different, and there was a corresponding contrast also in character and manners. Parts of one nation—Hebrews of the Hebrews—gathering annually at the same Great Feasts in Jerusalem, they had, in point of fact, resolved themselves into two distinct and diverse races. The intervening country of Samaria, colonised by an alien tribe, helped to perpetuate this separation, and prevent the intercourse which otherwise they might have enjoyed. As we associate the heights which bound the shores of *Gennesaret* with sterner nature—mountains cleft by ravines and water-torrents, leaving in their torn and dislocated sides the mementos of volcanic action—so, in keeping with all this primitive nature, we can think of the Galileans (at all events for many years preceding the Christian era) as a bold and turbulent race, far removed from the civilising influences of the capital. "Galilee of the Gentiles," the name given it by Isaiah 700 years before the Christian era, sufficiently indicates the position it held in his time, as a frontier land on which heathen shadows rested; and when

of the other three is occupied with the transactions not of Judea but of Galilee, and more especially the gracious words and deeds connected with its Lake. It is only at the close of all that they leave the shores of Gennesaret and conduct us to the capital. As Jerusalem formed the focus of John's inspired pictures, so the ancient "Chinneroth" was the centre and focus of theirs.

he still further speaks of its inhabitants in the passage which heads this chapter, as "a people that sat in darkness," and that dwelt "in the land of the shadow of death," we are left to picture half-educated boorish peasantry and fishermen, who participated in few of those longings which the southern Hebrews had, for the advent of the "Desire of all nations." Their very dialect or *patois* (if we may use a modern word) was peculiar. Peter had lisped it from his infancy, and it convicted him in the palace of Caiaphas of being a Galilean accomplice of his Lord—"Thy speech bewrayeth thee."*

But though the Lake of *Chinneroth*—save its casual mention in Num. xxxiv. 11; Josh. xii. 3; 1 Kings xv. 20—is unconnected with any Old Testament incidents, and isolated from the rest of the Jewish world, its aspect as well as its name and associations change with the dawn of the New Dispensation. When the Saviour of the world came to reside on its banks, it was no longer the secluded spot which once it was, fenced out by these mountain barriers from a busy world. It had become the scene of wondrous life. If we can again venture the comparison—whatever Gennesaret may have been in the times of the early monarchy, it had, like our own wild uplands and inland Lochs, emerged from seclusion. Royalty had not only, as with us, redeemed it from obscurity, but studded its banks with Roman palaces, and its waters with Roman pleasure-boats. The second Herod had built a new capital on its shores (*Tiberias*) in honour of his imperial Lord; and the reckless extravagance which that abandoned prince had learned at Rome, he had transferred to

* Matt. xxvi. 73.

the shores of this Judean Lake. Effeminate loungers and wasted valetudinarians crowded to its famous baths—Gentile slaves thronged the villas of their masters—heathen tax-gatherers were found seated at the custom-houses at the several ports—while a constant traffic with Damascus (the oldest emporium of trade in the world) kept an ever busy commerce on this inland sea, and ministered to the grasping avarice of its rulers. The Apostle fishermen were among the hundreds in humbler life who gained their livelihood by the boats and nets which studded its beach—the plentiful supply of fish which swarmed in the Lake giving its name to one of the towns on its shore—*Bethsaida*—"House of fish." Many similar hamlets cast their shadows in its waters, or nestled under the slopes of the adjoining hills; while one portion with which we may afterwards be more familiar—the *Plain of Gennesaret*—was considered the garden of Palestine, and with its hot spring and irrigating streams gave a return to the husbandman unknown elsewhere in that nation of the nations. Well might the old Jewish writers speak enthusiastically of this beauteous expanse as "beloved of God above all the waters of Canaan;" and extract from the word "Gennesaret," as its most likely derivation, the meaning "Paradise of Perfection."

The luxuriance of vegetation on its banks, and mildness of climate, may partly be accounted for from the deep depression of its basin. Though not to the same extent, the Galilean sheet of water partakes of the strange peculiarity of the Dead Sea, in being far below the level of the country. No transition can be more marked than from the uplands which border the Lake on every side, down

to the sultry hollow where it lies. In summer the heat is intolerable. But, for this very reason, we may be prepared for early and profuse vegetation where the soil favours. Olive gardens and vineyards, we have reason to believe, in the time of our Lord, crested the heights which are now bare and treeless. But in the lower regions, tropical plants still spread in untrained luxuriance. Palms mark the old site of Tiberias. The first flowers blooming in Galilee, with their pink and red blossoms flushing the Lake margin, may still be seen from the very spot where Jesus spake of the lilies of the field as weaving a richer mantle than any Tyrian loom; while the same twisting thorn which was taken to wreath, in after-times, His bleeding brow, may be seen hiding itself amid the rocks which cross the traveller's path. Perhaps nowhere in Palestine does the "Sower go forth to sow" earlier than in the spot where Jesus spake His Sower Parable—nowhere does the reaper gather in an earlier harvest. Its mildness may, in the age to which we refer, have made it more a winter resort, the intense heat sending many of its families in summer to the cooling breezes of the uplands. This we know, that our blessed Lord Himself generally spent the summer months in Judea, lingering there after the celebration of the Passover, and revisiting Capernaum and its neighbourhood as winter approached, when the return of the inhabitants gave him a fresh opportunity of preaching the kingdom of God.*

* It may be interesting here to give the oldest and not least trustworthy picture of the Scenes which are now describing. "This Lake of Gennesareth is so called from the country adjoining to it. Its breadth is forty furlongs, and its length one hundred and forty; its waters are sweet, and very agreeable for drinking, for they are finer than the thick waters of other fens; the lake is also pure, and on every side ends directly at the shores

Shall we pause, before proceeding, to ask, what of *Gennesaret* now? Very different is its present aspect. It has become a wreck of vanished loveliness, lapsed into its old "shadow of death." "The light" that gleamed on its waters is quenched. Turkish misrule and delusion are supplanting holier recollections. Its glittering palaces and teeming villages—the white-winged messengers of commerce or pleasure that studded once its sparkling waves—all gone! Unchanging nature, it is true, in her indestructible outlines, is still there to identify it as the hallowed haunt of the Lord of Glory, but travellers saunter along the sandy beach amid ghastly silence and loneliness. Save the one ruin of Migdol, nothing is left to recall departed greatness. The very site of Capernaum is disputed. Its doom is written on the silent

and at the sand; it is also of a temperate nature when you draw it up, and of a more gentle nature than river or fountain water, and yet always cooler than one could expect in so diffuse a place as this is. Now when this water is kept in the open air, it is as cold as that of snow, which the country people are accustomed to make by night in summer. There are several kinds of fish in it, different both to the taste and the sight from those elsewhere."—*Josephus Bell. J.* iii. 10, 7.

"The country, also, that lies over against this lake, hath the same name of Gennesareth; its nature is wonderful as well as its beauty; its soil is so fruitful that all sorts of trees can grow upon it, and the inhabitants accordingly plant all sorts of trees there; for the temper of the air is so well mixed, that it agrees very well with those several sorts. Particularly walnuts, which require the coldest air, flourish there in vast plenty; there are palm-trees also, which grow best in hot air, fig-trees also and olives grow near them, which yet require an air that is more temperate. One may call this place the ambition of nature, where it forces those plants that are naturally enemies to one another to agree together; it is a happy contention of the seasons, as if every one of them laid claim to this country; for it not only nourishes different sorts of autumnal fruit beyond men's expectation, but preserves them a great while; it supplies men with the principal fruits, with grapes and figs continually, during ten months of the year, and the rest of the fruits as they become ripe together, through the whole year, for, besides the good temperature of the air, it is also watered from a most fertil fountain."—*Josephus Bell. J.* iii. 10, 8.

rocks, and murmured by the restless waves, and echoed by the Divine Word. Tangled thickets creep in wild profusion over bank and shore—and the three or four tiny boats that ripple the waters, seem to mock the old picture of its busy life!

The one epoch of its glory seems to have been during the first Advent of the Son of God. What may it not yet be, when that same "Sun of Righteousness" shall again visit it with "the brightness of His rising?"—when its vine-dressers shall cleave to Him who is the true Vine—when its fishermen shall sing hymns to His glory on the midnight wave—and when, from the Christian temples which throng its shores, the Gospel welcome and Hosannah shall be heard from ten thousand tongues, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord?"*

* Of its present aspect and general appearance, Dr Clarke says:—

"It is by comparison alone that any due conception of its appearance can be communicated to the minds of those who have not seen it. Speaking of it comparatively, it may be described as longer and finer than any of our Cumberland or Westmoreland lakes, although it be perhaps inferior to Loch Lomond, in Scotland. It does not possess the vastness of the Lake of Geneva, although it much resembles it in some points of view. In picturesque beauty it comes nearest to the Lake of Locarno, in Italy, although it be destitute of anything similar to the islands by which that majestic piece of water is adorned. It is inferior in magnitude, and perhaps in the height of its surrounding mountains, to the Lake Asphaltites; but its broad and extended surface, covering the bottom of a profound valley, surrounded by lofty and precipitous eminences, when added to the impression under which every Christian pilgrim approaches it, gives to it a character of unparalleled dignity."—*Clarke's Travels*, vol. iv., p. 210.

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

II.

The Home.

Few are the tones of love He hears,
Unpillow'd oft His weary head;
By day He wrought, by night He prayed,
His way was paved with love and tears.

"And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt at Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast."—Matt. iv. 13.

THE HOME.

THAT is always a momentous era in the history of every individual, when the period of youth is over, and manhood goes forth to grapple with the stern realities of life. Existence has new responsibilities—new cares—new hopes—new motives—new trials—new joys. If the character was plastic before, and only moulding or developing, now it fast consolidates. "The Man" takes a new position. He selects his own associates—discovers his own resources—manifests his own tastes and congenialities. The magnetic needle, trembling and oscillating before, fixes itself now to its pole; and there, with little variation, remains till he goes to the last and longest home of all.

We have in these words the first glimpse which the Bible gives us of *the Home of Jesus.* Around that name, the earthly Home of the Lord of Glory, how many hallowed and sacred thoughts gather! Other spots already, indeed, claimed the honour. *Egypt* was for a time His home. Thither, in the morning of that mysterious infancy, He fled with His parents, till a message from Heaven assured of a safe return. *Nazareth* was His home. There, an impenetrable silence broods over thirty years of wondrous interest to all time. We dare not lift the veil of secrecy. But we can well picture the lovingness of that holy Childhood and Youth, unruffled by one frown or passion or taint of selfishness—

a Holy Light in a dwelling of peaceful obscurity, His hands toiling, as we have reason to believe they did, in the workshop of His reputed father, thus voluntarily subjecting Himself to the full heritage of the curse of toil. We can picture the wanderings of that mysterious boyhood amid the olive groves and wooded eminences which enclosed the Village. We can listen in thought to the earliest prayers lisped in the quiet homestead or on the silent hills. Rising even then with elastic step "a great while before day," while the lower valley was still sleeping amid the shadows of early dawn, the "Holy child" was invoking the ear of His Father in Heaven.

But CAPERNAUM is invested with a deeper interest still. Youth, obscurity, privacy, are left. He is now the public Person—the Teacher sent from God—the MAN. Nazareth was the home of His parents. There He was "subject to them." The period of subjection is over. He has completed His beauteous example—He has read His holy lesson to boyhood and youth. Now He has to bear a more advanced and dignified testimony. Manhood in its prime is invited to come to the shores of *Gennesaret*, or to enter one of the lowly porticos in the town of *Capernaum*, and gather solemn instruction by a visit to the HOME OF JESUS!

"Master, where dwellest thou?" said two of His disciple-followers on one occasion. "Come and see," was His answer. He invites us to come also. We can, indeed, speak nothing regarding that lowly dwelling; we can mark no stone of the outer building; we cannot tell whether the blue waves of the Lake murmured under its lattice; or whether it looked out to the Vines climbing the

slopes which hemmed in the plain. But the mere locality is nothing. It is the wondrous Life that stamped its impress on that home, and that reads many a lesson still as to what the *home* and the *life* together should be. Come, then, let us gather with all reverence around this model "Home," where the *ideal* of MAN, the root and flower of perfect Humanity, mysteriously unfolded itself.

Let us look to the life of Jesus in its twofold aspect—*social* and *individual, public* and *private.*

I. SOCIALLY.—The character of the Redeemer partook of no asceticism. The Home of Jesus was in the centre of Galilean and (Jerusalem excepted) the centre of Palestine life. He was, in this respect, unlike His great forerunner, John the Baptist. Rigid, austere, separating himself from the amenities of existence, the wilderness and solitudes of Judea were his abode. He shunned society. He came and delivered his message to teeming multitudes by day, and then, as the night shadows gathered around the Jordan, he plunged back into the untrodden wilds, with no eye to look kindly on him but that of One, whose presence to him was more than all human tenderness could be! There was much to love, at least to revere, about the Harbinger of the Messiah. He was bold, honest, intrepid, sincere. He had forsaken all for the sake of his message. He could afford no time to fritter away in a worthless world. It took him the livelong night to get his spirit braced up for the solemn embassy of the morrow. With the prayer still lingering on his lips, he went forth with the old burning message of persuasion and terror—"Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"

But the Home of Jesus was not the wilderness! No secluded nook was His selected dwelling—no quiet Palestine hamlet where He could dwell in mystic loneliness, refusing to mingle in the common business and duties of life. He pitched His own tent in the midst of human tabernacles—mid the din and bustle of a town—the hum of busy industry ever around Him—coming in contact with every description of character—rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, noblemen, centurions, publicans at the receipt of custom, sailors and bargemen on the Lake, rude Galilean mountaineers and shepherds, caravans crossing with motley crowds from Syria and Persia to lower Palestine and Egypt. He met them all in free, unrestrained intercourse. At one time, reading to the Jews in their synagogue. At another, gathering the multitude at their spare hours by the sea-side, with suggestive nature before Him,—His pulpit a fisherman's bark,—proclaiming the great salvation. At another, seating a similar crowd on the rank grass at the head of the Lake, He would miraculously feed them with the bread which perisheth, and unfold spiritual things from the carnal type. Nor do we find Him in any way spurning the duties and delights of social fellowship. At one time, He consecrates with His presence a marriage-feast at the neighbouring Cana. At another, He is guest in a Pharisee's house, eating with publicans and sinners. At another, as the Jewish Sabbath sun sinks behind Mount Tabor, lo, the shores and highways are lined with eager hundreds. The sick and palsied, the blind and lame, come to receive the magic touch, and listen to the Omnipotent word! Wherever He goes, His steps are tracked with mercy; misery,

in every form, crouches at His feet; and gratitude bathes the wondrous Healer with its tears.

II. Thus much for His outward, public, social life—the stirring scenes of ministry and miracle. But is the portraiture complete? Does the revelation of the ideal of Human perfection end here? Turn we now to its other phase, the remaining complement in that wondrous character;—the PRIVATE Life of Jesus.

He had, as each of His people have, a secret, *inner* being, in conjunction with the outer and social:—the one a reflex of the other. That busy world on the one side of the Sea of Tiberias, witnessed His mighty deeds, heard His weighty words, and glowed under the sunshine of holy smiles and joyous friendships. But amid these boats flitting up and down the lake, one may ever and anon be seen (as the twilight shadows are falling) gently traversing its bosom; and when moored on the other side, a Figure, companionless and alone, is ascending the rugged steeps of the mountain, until the veil of night shuts Him out from view. When the lights of luxury are gleaming on the opposite shores, and the fishermen's oars are heard pursuing their nightly task, the Son of Man and Lord of Glory is seeking refreshment and repose for His soul in divine communion. With the deep solitudes of nature for His oratory, He "continues all night in prayer to God." He is left "alone," and yet He is "not alone," for His "God and Father are with Him!"

Most beautiful union of the active and the contemplative: public duty and private devotion; ceaseless exertion, and needful spiritual cessation and repose; the outer life all

LIBRARY OF THE

given to God and man; the private inner life sedulously cared for and nurtured; night by night, and morning by morning, the sinless and spotless One fetching down heavenly supplies, as if in every respect He were "tempted as we are," requiring equal strength for duty and preparation for trial. How it links us in sympathy to this adorable Redeemer, to think that He had bodily as well as mental affinities with ourselves; that He participated with us (sin only excepted) in ALL our infirmities!

Do we, like Him, combine the two great elements of human character? Are our *public* duties, the cares, and business, and engrossments of the world, finely tempered and hallowed by a *secret* walk with God? Is our outer life distinguished like His by earnest diligence in our varied callings—love to God and kindness and goodwill to man throwing a softened halo around our path; beneficence, generosity, sterling honour, charity, unselfishness characterising all we do?

Is our *inner* life a feeble transcript of His? If the world were to follow us from its busy thoroughfares, would it trace us to our family altars and our closet devotions? Would it discover in our secret histories, "Sabbaths of the soul," when wearied with the toil and struggle of earth, we ascend in thought the mount of Prayer, and in these holy mental solitudes seek an audience of our Father in Heaven? Action and meditation, I repeat, are the two great components of Christian life, and the perfection of the religious character is to find the two in unison and harmony. Not like Martha of old, all bustle, energy, impulse, and finding little time for higher interests. Nor like Mary, on the other hand, wrapt in devout meditation, indifferent to the duties and shrinking from the struggles of life, but the happy intermingling of

both. In one word, come and visit *the Home of Jesus;*—see that noblest of combinations, consuming zeal and childlike teachableness—untiring devotion to His fellows, hallowed converse with His God. Oh, that each dwelling, that each *life,* might be like that! Would that, in order to make a "model home," we were led oftimes to cross and recross in thought *Gennesaret's* lake. Then would our hearths and households more frequently be like Edens, blooming in a desert world—miniatures of the great Heavenly Home, where still there will be the beautiful combination of untiring energy in God's service, and of peaceful rest and repose in God's love.

Let us only add, as one out of many practical lessons this subject suggests, a word of encouragement for the guiltiest.

Where did this Blessed Lord of Glory establish His home? What portion of the wide world, or of the sacred land, did He select during the three most eventful years of earth's history for His most frequent residence? It was "the land of darkness;" it was "the region of the shadow of death." It was among a people who, in the most impressive and significant of Bible figures, are represented as "*sitting*" in that darkness; content to remain in guilty apathy and unconcern, heeding not the gloom around them, and the appalling shadows gathering overhead. Yet, He spurned them not. No; He, "The Light," entered this thick Cimmerian darkness. Incarnate truth came into the midst of error. Incarnate wisdom settled in the midst of ignorance. Life came and settled in the abodes of death!

What does this teach? but that none need despair. Those who till this hour have been "sitting in darkness"—the darkness of guilt, and sin, and miserable estrangement from

God—may listen to the voice of Jesus saying—"I am the Light of the world, he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

And not only do we here learn that Jesus *comes* to the very worst, and is willing to enlighten them, but that He can *change* the very worst—that He *does* enlighten them. The Sun of Righteousness not only arose on Galilee, but He rose "with healing in His beams." "Its common people heard Him gladly." His best converts, his truest and trustiest friends were from the ports, and fishing-boats, and villages around *Gennesaret*. Oh, if He effected such a change on them, there is no room for despondency! "That is the true light which lighteth every one that cometh into the world." He is willing to take up His home in every soul—though that soul be as the valley of the shadow of death. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, is willing to shine into that heart with the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Whatever your darkness may be, Christ can relieve it; Christ can dispel it. If your heart be as a *Gennesaret* swept with storms, He will come and whisper in your ears, as He did of old, His calming words—"Peace, be still."

The Home of Jesus, His outer home, at Capernaum, is but a memory of the past; not one stone has been left upon another that has not been thrown down. But He has a more enduring home, which human hands cannot annihilate, and time cannot destroy. "Thus saith the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, I dwell in the high and in the holy place; *with him also that is humble and of a contrite spirit!*"

III.

The Fishermen.

'Tis not upon a tranquil lake
  Our pleasant task we ply,
Where all along our glist'ning wake
  The softest moonbeams lie;

Where rippling wave and dashing oar,
  Our midnight chant attend,
Or whisp'ring palm-leaves from the shore
  With midnight silence blend.

Full many a dreary anxious hour,
  We watch our nets alone,
In drenching spray and driving shower,
  And hear the night-birds moan.

"And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret. . . . . Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net."—LUKE v. 1, 4, 5.

THE FISHERMEN.

THE first Memory of *Gennesaret* is appropriately connected with a fishing-scene in its inland sea. It must have been now about the end of November or beginning of December, when the sultry heat of summer had disappeared; when the trees were either bared of their leaves, or seared with autumnal tints, and the voice of the turtle was silent. Our Blessed Lord had recently returned to His native Galilee, after a summer absence in Judea; and several eventful months were now to be spent on the shores of the lake, ere the next passover, in March or April, summoned Him again to the capital.

As He was now walking alone along the white sand that fringed the beach, we may suppose it to have been at that morning hour when nature was waking up again to life and energy;—the wonted traffic had been resumed in the little seaport of Capernaum, and the fishermen, who had been out the livelong night, were returning to the nearest landing-point with their spoil. Four of these seafarers, Andrew, Peter, John, and James, had reached the shore. They had been unsuccessful in their labours; weary and jaded, they were in the act of washing their nets before repairing to their hamlets for refreshment and rest. But One who, as we shall presently see, was no stranger to them, had been noting their unrecompensed toil. There was a deep meaning and reason, which they knew not at the time, for the dispiriting

results of their midnight industry, but which was, ere long, to be made manifest. Meanwhile, however, Simon is accosted by a voice whose music he was often in future to hear. His Lord "as one that serveth" begs from the lowly fisherman the accommodation of his boat, that he might make it a platform from which to address his first Gennesaret auditory — a throng of ardent followers who had gathered on the sea-beach, eager to listen to His teachings.

We may realise the scene. The Lake, so often fretted with storms, exposed to sudden gusts coming sweeping down the ravines of the mountains, was now hushed into a dead calm. Tree and rock, fishing-hamlet and villa, were mirrored in its quiet waters. Hushed, too, was the dense promiscuous multitude that crowded on the shore; while the great object of their eager curiosity—*Jesus of Nazareth*—sat in meek majesty in Peter's fishing-boat, about to speak the words of eternal life!

Dare we picture to ourselves the expression of that god-like countenance? Accustomed as we are to think of Him as the ideal of human excellence, and in outward form as well as inward loveliness, "fairer than the children of men," we may venture to realise some feeble image of that portraiture, while yet the happy memories of peaceful Nazareth were hovering around Him, and ere a woe-worn path had furrowed the brow of the Man of Sorrows with the lineaments of predicted sadness. It was the sunny morning of a dark and troubled life-day. The Sun of Righteousness, as He arose on this valley and shadow of death, had no spot, no murky cloud resting on His disc, foreboding the darkness that was to shroud His setting. He was "as a bridegroom coming

forth out of his chamber, and rejoicing like a strong man to run his race." With grace poured into His lips, this "Chiefest among ten thousand"—this "altogether Lovely one"—proceeds to unfold the great revelation for which, during four thousand years, the world had waited in anxious expectancy. It was a momentous day in the history of the Church. It was the inauguration of the first noble band of missionaries—an ordination scene and ordination sermon—the setting apart of under shepherds by the Great Shepherd, to "feed the flock of God" which He was about to "purchase with His own blood."

We cannot pronounce when and where the first introduction took place between Jesus and these future teachers of the world. May He not possibly, in the days of His youth, when living in mysterious seclusion in the not far-distant Nazareth, have stood on the shores of Gennesaret, and, as the young fishermen of Bethsaida were helping their fathers to adjust their nets, may they not have unconsciously beheld in the stranger their future Master and Lord? We can form, with greater certainty, such a conjecture at a later period; we have in one passage an indirect intimation that Capernaum formed a rendezvous for the caravan in north Galilee, in going up to Jerusalem to observe the paschal feast.* If so, might not these youths, who were afterwards to be linked in so holy a relation, love to group and pitch their tents together in that sacred pilgrimage? Might they not travel onwards singing their psalms, under the clear light of moon and stars, in their nightly journey — the Galilean fishermen little dreaming that some of those very

* John ii. 12.

songs they chanted were to the praise of the wondrous Being who, in human form, walked at their side?

But be this as it may, we know at all events, that not many months before the transaction here recorded, they had met Him on the banks of the Jordan, probably after the celebration of the passover, when, on returning to their native lake, they paused to listen to the Baptist's stirring words. The Great Messiah, of whom he bare witness, was then pointed out to them. They hailed Jesus of Nazareth as their Lord and Master, and cast in their lot with Him as disciples. Whether they met during the brief intervening period we cannot tell. But we may surely well believe that oftimes would these four fishermen beguile their lone midnight hours on the lake, by discoursing of Him whom His great Forerunner had so recently pointed out to them as "the Lamb of God." Could Peter forget the penetrating omniscience which had even then scanned his own character, and anticipated the lights and shadows in his ardent temperament?* Could Andrew and John forget the hallowed evening converse, when, at His own gracious invitation, He bade them welcome to His temporary abode, and from four o'clock till the night shadows closed around them, caused their hearts to burn within them? Moreover, if they had never personally met since, their confidence in His power and in the divinity of His mission must have been strengthened and confirmed by the miracle recently performed on the nobleman's son at Capernaum, all the more impressive that it was by the power of a distant word at Cana, that the dying youth had been raised to life. It must have been, at

* John i. 42.

all events, now with a joyful surprise, while washing their nets, that His longed-for voice was heard. How would the lost labour of that midnight be forgotten, and the thought of fatigue banished, when they beheld Him once more standing on the shore ready to unfold to them and to the multitudes the mysteries of His kingdom! With what delight would they gather around to listen to the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth!

Let us pause at this point in the sacred story, and gather a few practical lessons.

I. Observe here, *how God honours worldly industry, and hallows His own appointed heritage of toil.*

These fishermen, though enrolled among the disciples of Jesus, did not on that account forsake their honest callings, as if discipleship and daily work were incongruous. No; with all the hallowed recollections of that day at Bethabara and the Jordan, no sooner did they reach Bethsaida, than, girt in their rough hides, they were out night after night on the sea, patiently waiting subsequent communications of their Lord's will. And now, when He meets them again, when that loving Voice is once more heard, how are they engaged? Still at their work—their hands ministering to their necessities—standing knee-deep in the water, in the shadow of their fishing-boats, "washing their nets." What does all this tell us, but that Christ honours and consecrates daily industry. He would here, as elsewhere, proclaim the beautiful harmony between the most laborious ardour in our several earthly employments and religious earnestness; that the world's dullest tasks and most drudging toil can be baptized

and hallowed with the new-born spiritual element; and that, while men may be "not slothful in business, they may be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

II. We learn that *Jesus gradually prepares His people for service and trial.*

As in mental training, so in spiritual, there is an education—a gradual progressive discipline. They are brought to their exalted attainments in grace — the consecrated heights of His kingdom—not by some sudden or miraculous elevation, but step by step. It is "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." The fishermen of Bethsaida may have received, as we have already conjectured, the first hallowed impressions from casual meetings with the young Nazareth Pilgrim in their journeys to the city of solemnities; or the earliest seed of the kingdom might have been more recently planted by the teachings of the Baptist. This had been still further nurtured by a solemn personal interview with their Lord. Months had elapsed to allow all these to take root. They had been left to themselves during this intervening period to a secret work of faith and prayer. And now, when love has been deepened, and faith strengthened, He demands loftier services; imposes heavier responsibilities. The Disciples are to become Apostles. The nets and boats of Galilee are to be left for the mightiest embassy ever intrusted to human hands. There *may* be exceptions, and there *are* exceptions to this great rule. A persecutor may be struck down, and in a moment transformed into an apostle. A felon may be arrested by grace amid the agonies of crucifixion, and in the twinkling of an eye be

translated from a criminal's death to a believer's crown. But God's processes in the spiritual economy are, *generally speaking*, gradual and progressive. The temple rises stone by stone. Nicodemus-like we have to grope our way to higher spiritual manifestations, to higher faith, higher duties, higher grace. Were it otherwise, it would contradict the Divine method of working. It would unteach the oft-recorded lesson in that mighty volume of parables, where growth is never sudden, but slow—silent—almost imperceptible: the sapling hardening into the oak before it can wrestle with the storm; the child creeping before it can walk, spelling its way upwards through successive stages of mental progress. God himself more than once, indeed, employs this very same image regarding His people. He acts a parent's part in guiding the tottering steps of feeble spiritual infancy—"dandling them on His knees"—"comforting them as one whom his mother comforteth"—"bearing them on His shoulders, as a man beareth his own son that serveth him"—"leading them about, instructing them, keeping them as the apple of His eye;" till at length, strong in the manhood of vigorous faith, they "mount up on eagle's wings."

III. *Learn in our seasons of trial and despondency never to despair.*

Peter had been toiling all night, and nothing had been caught. But his Lord gives the word—"Launch forth into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." The other replies by telling of their want of success—that "all night" (the best and most likely time for catching) they had laboured in vain; but, addressing Jesus as "Master" (evi-

dently shewing the relation in which he already stood to Him), he adds in simple faith and submission to a will he had been taught to love—"Nevertheless, at Thy word I will let down the net." The result was the enclosure of such "a multitude of fishes that the net brake."

Ah! when was the soul ever disappointed which followed the Lord fully? How often, in our night-seasons of despondency and trial, are we prone, in our short-sighted folly, to exclaim, "All these things are against me?" How often do we feel, in spiritual experience, as if all effort in Christian attainment were worse than hopeless? The heavens have become as brass, and the earth as iron—our prayers are unavailing—ordinances are unblest—sanctuary wells are without water—our sun is wading amid clouds; The net of faith is let down amid the promises of God; but unable to appropriate them, we are ready to say amid this long night of spiritual toil, "Surely my Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me." Nay! nay! pray on—labour on—trust on—"They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength!" Resolve, with Peter, "*Nevertheless*, at *Thy* word, Blessed Saviour! I will launch forth once more." I will let down my net into this dark, deep, unfathomable sea. "Though thou slay me yet will I trust in Thee." In ourselves, Lord, we are helpless, hopeless, weak, perishing; but at *Thy* word we proceed. Lord, what wouldst Thou have us to do? Our wills we would resolve into Thine: Thy will is always the best. We shall not arraign the appointments of unerring rectitude. Even though at times we are led to adopt the words of the prophet—"I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought and in vain;" with

him can we add, "Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." Even if carrying a cross be required, fresh launching forth into the deeps and midnights of trial, we shall let down our nets, assured in the end of a glorious recompense. For have we not His own recorded promise?—"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning, and He shall come unto us as the rain; as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

Let us seek to value more and more that precious Word. The multitudes on *Gennesaret's* shore, and the disciple in the boat, who with fond eagerness listened, and with joyful alacrity obeyed, read to us solemn lessons. Of the one it is said, "They pressed on Him to hear the word of God;" of the other, that, triumphing over carnal doubts and reasonings, he exclaimed, "Nevertheless, at Thy word."

Oh, what a blessed formula for us! "This path of mine is dark, mysterious, perplexing; *nevertheless,* at *Thy* word I will go forward. This trial of mine is cutting, sore for flesh and blood to bear. It is hard to breathe through a broken heart, "Thy will be done." But, *nevertheless,* at Thy word I will say, "Even so, Father!" This besetting habit or infirmity, or sin of mine, is difficult to crucify. It has become part of myself,—a second nature; to be severed from it would be like the cutting off of a right hand, or the plucking out of a right eye. *Nevertheless,* at Thy word, I will lay aside every weight; this idol I will utterly abolish. This righteousness of mine it is hard to ignore; all these virtues, and amiabilities, and natural graces, it is hard to believe that they dare not in any way be mixed up in the

matter of my salvation; and that I am to receive all from first to last as the gift of God, through Jesus Christ my Lord. "*Nevertheless, at Thy word,* I will count all but loss for the excellency of His knowledge."

Reader! let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly! Let it be the man of your counsel; the ultimate court of appeal in every perplexity. If your own proud reason or self-will, or corrupted nature and blinded conscience, should dictate an opposing line of procedure, let this lofty determination settle and silence all dubiety—"*Nevertheless, at Thy word.*" Sit as a meek disciple under this infallible Arbiter. Silence the temptations of the great Adversary as your Lord silenced them before you, by the rebuke, "Get thee behind Me, Satan—It is written." And when the Sabbath comes round, be it yours, like the crowd on Gennesaret's shores, to go to the sanctuary, eagerly thirsting for the Word of eternal life;—not the words of frail mortals, worms of the dust, but, despising all the excellency of man's wisdom, seeking only to have declared unto you the whole counsel of God. Be earnest in prayer, that He may send forth His light and His truth to lead you and guide you. Then shall a Saviour God be invisibly present by His spirit, to bless and lighten, to gladden and refresh your souls; and the Beatitude, intended for all time and for every age of the Church, will be made good in your experience:—"Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance."

IV.

The Call and Consecration.

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee;
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shalt be;

Perish every fond ambition,
All I've sought, or hoped, or known,
Yet how rich is my condition,
God and heaven are still my own.

"And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land they forsook all and followed him."—LUKE v. 10; MATT. iv. 19; MARK i. 17–21.

THE CALL AND CONSECRATION.

THE Sermon to the multitudes we have spoken of in the preceding chapter being finished, the "Consecration service," the all-absorbing event of that memorable hour, begins.

How is it conducted? What is the Saviour's mode of illustrating solemn truths which are to have their bearings on the remotest ages of the world? In that great Temple of Nature—the everlasting mountains its pillars—the arching sky its roof—the Lord alike of nature and of grace discourses to His disciples and to the Church of the future by means of an *acted parable*. He who, at a later period of His ministry, cursed a fruitless fig-tree on the way to Bethphage, in order that it might be to all time a standing memorial of the guilt of hypocritical profession, now makes the humble callings of the fishermen of Galilee the medium for conveying to their own minds, lessons of faith, and confidence, and hope. He takes the nets they were washing, as exponents of these great truths, and prepares to make them "Fishers of men."*

At the bidding of their Master, after their night of unsuc-

* "'Αμφίβλησπρον, from ἀμφιβάλλω, does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It signifies a double net of considerable size. While δίκτυον means a net of smaller size, used either for hunting or fishing."—*Olshausen*, Vol. i., p. 180.

"The Lord clothes His promise in the language of that art which was familiar to Peter. The fisherman is to catch men, as David, the shepherd, taken from amid the sheepfolds, is to feed them. Origen follows this further up, and finds the same prophecy of his future vocation in the case of Paul—the tentmaker shall become the maker of everlasting tabernacles."—*Trench on the Miracles*, pp. 134–5. See also *Stier*, Vol. i., p. 87.

cessful toil, they had once more launched forth into the deep. The nets had been lowered—the unrewarded efforts of the long midnight hours were more than recompensed. So wondrous was the capture, that they had to beckon to Andrew and John to come to their assistance from the adjoining pier. The net was discharged of its contents, and both vessels were filled to sinking with the unprecedented spoil. It is the sequel of the narrative which is now to engage us, in which three points invite our attention.

I. Simon Peter's Exclamation.—"*When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*"

The feelings of Peter form the natural workings of every soul which, conscious of its sinfulness, has been brought into visible contact with its God. He had known of Jesus before as the Holy Youth—the Teacher sent from God—the Prophet of whom the Baptist testified that He was "mightier than he." But here he felt the consciousness of a more august Presence still. He sees standing before him the Lord of creation, the owner of "the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea." His feelings are those of trembling Jacob, —"Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." The finite felt himself in contact with the Infinite. Faith, love, adoring reverence, and intermingled with all, a profound abasing sense of worthlessness and guilt, makes this impulsive apostle humble himself in the dust. In tremulous dread, he is ready to say with Pilgrim Israel, as they cowered under the blazing peaks of Sinai, "Let not God speak with us, lest we die."*

* See Trench, p. 133.

Very different was his subsequent conduct, when he had learnt, by "perfect love," to "cast out fear." Called to gaze into profounder depths of his Redeemer's glory—though subsequent nearer and dearer fellowship tended in no degree to diminish his sense of that gulph, which must ever be untraversed between the Creator and the creature—the sinner and the divinely exalted Holy One*—nay, though quickened spiritual sensibilities would tend rather to augment and intensify the sense of unworthiness and imperfection—yet the terror of this first surprise never again returns. When we next see him at his Saviour's feet, owning Him as God, there is no trembling accent on his lip as he makes the joyous avowal, "Lord to whom can we go, Thou hast the words of eternal life; we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God, which should come into the world."

As years roll over his head, increased familiarity with his Divine Master only deepens this loving, trustful confidingness; and even after the Lord had withdrawn from him His visible presence—after the heavenly veil had shut out His glorified person from the eyes of His apostle—that fervent soul loved to penetrate the invisible; realising an absent Saviour, he thus comforted his own heart and the hearts of those to whom he wrote, "Whom having not seen ye love, and in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Why, and how this wondrous change in his feelings? It is the history of every believer still, when he comes for the first time into solemn, heart-searching contact with God;—when

* Neander, *in loco.*

the eyes of his understanding are enlightened, and the awful consciousness passes over the stricken spirit—"I am a poor, miserable, guilty, condemned being, responsible to One who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." Ah! when life's long-slumbering atheist-dream has been thus dispelled; when the soul, naked, unsheltered, guilty, unforgiven, feels itself all in a moment in the presence of the God with whom, emphatically, "it has to do;" when an inexorable law flashes conviction and condemnation on a misspent past, speaking trumpet-tongued of the righteousness of the lawgiver; when a future of limitless being rises up before him in ghastly reality;—impressive and solemn ciphers, unheeded before, now standing in front of the solitary "unit of earthly existence;" when the miserable shreds and patches of earthly goodness and virtue are disclosed in their utter worthlessness—conventional moralities seen to be but "splendid sins"—sparks of fire of their own kindling, quenched one after another, and revealing only a darkness more felt; the awakened sinner, stricken down, helpless, terrified, before this first revelation of JEHOVAH, exclaims, with Job, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes!" He gazes on the great God of Heaven—the Holy One—the Just One—the Righteous One—but it is out of Christ, and He is a "consuming fire." "Depart from me," he exclaims in a paroxysm of fear. It is the feeling of our fallen Parents of old, when, under the fresh consciousness of their guilt, they fled affrighted from their Maker. The voice so lately all music has nothing but terror and wrath;—the flaming cherubim guard the way. Where is the spot in the

wide universe to which that burdened soul would not rush to screen itself from revealed truth, holiness, omniscience?

But, lo! the flaming sword guarding the way to the Tree of Life is seen quenched with blood. The unbridged gulph of separation has been spanned; a glorious sunshine bringing peace and rest and consolation, bursts from that dark and lowering sky. The brief history of that joyful transformation is thus told,—"*God is in Christ, reconciling a lost world to Himself.*" Yes! that trembling one ventures to lift up his eyes in these moments of waking agony. He sees One standing by him in mingled majesty and tenderness, who has magnified that law and made it honourable, and who, by His doing and dying, has opened up a way of forgiveness to the guiltiest. The gates of torment are shut; the gates of glory are opened. It is no longer a "fearful" but a blessed thing "to fall into the hands of the living God." In trembling transport he exclaims—(not as in the first anguish of awaking convictions, "Depart from me," but,) "Lord, to whom can I go but unto Thee?" "Entreat me not to leave Thee, nor to return from following after Thee. Where Thou goest, I will go; where Thou dwellest, I will dwell. Through life I will pass cheered by Thy love; in death I shall be supported by Thine everlasting arms; through all eternity I shall in Thine unveiled presence rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Oh, happy consummation! if, while we are smitten down by a sense of our unworthiness, we are directed to adoring Gospel views of Christ, in His person, and offices, and work. Believer! turn your eye with arrested gaze on this divine Saviour. The more you gaze, the more will terror give way to

wonder, love, confidence, joy. The more you study His divine character, the more you will understand the divine secret of repose—"Acquaint thyself now with God and be at peace."

II. We have THE SAVIOUR'S ASSURANCE.—How gently He speaks!—"*Jesus said unto him, Simon,* FEAR NOT." It is the same calming word which, as we shall find in after times, soothed and lulled disquieting misgivings—dropping like oil on the surging sea—"*Fear not,* it is I, be not afraid." When St John found himself gazing on the lustrous countenance of his Redeemer in Patmos, he fell awe-struck at His feet, "as one dead." But the whisper of a well-known voice was enough to restore confidence and joy. It was the same gracious watchword—"*Fear not,* I am He that liveth, and was dead."

What a sublime antidote to our misgivings! What a balm to our troubled spirits, these accents of undying and unchanging solace, stealing like celestial chimes from the upper sanctuary—"FEAR NOT!" *Fear not,* thou poor sinner trembling under a sense of thy sin, thy great unworthiness, thy black ingratitude. "I am come to seek and to save them that are lost." *Fear not,* thou faint and weary one, appalled at thine own deep corruptions and guilty estrangements. The temptations and snares of a seductive world, and that great antagonist, unbelief, ever tempting thee to stray from the living God;—"I will make my grace sufficient for thee." *Fear not,* thou tempted and tried one, beaten down with a great fight of afflictions; thy garnered earthly blessings swept from thee like chaff in the summer's threshing floor, thy household plundered of its nearest and dearest, and the gaping fissures in thy bleeding heart refusing to be

healed or comforted. *Fear not,* I am better than son or daughter, or any earthly relative. Heart and flesh may faint and fail, but God is the strength of thy heart, and thy portion for ever. *Fear not,* thou who "through fear of death art all thy lifetime subject to bondage." I once was dead. I have sanctified the grave before thee. I have fought and conquered death in his own territories, and dragged him in triumph at my chariot wheels. This last enemy may at times, be to thee like a cold ghastly shade moving on the midnight lake. But trust Me, when it comes, thou shalt hear loud amid the storm a Voice mightier than the noise of many waters; yea, than the mighty waves of the sea—"*Fear not, it is I, be not afraid.*"

The Saviour, having allayed his servant's fears, proceeds to unfold the nature and duties, the responsibilities and encouragements, of the great apostolic work.

How startled must that fisherman of Galilee have been by the announcement which now fell upon his ears—"*From henceforth thou shalt catch men!*" Jesus made the mute tenants of the lake that lay in dead and dying heaps in the net, a living parable and pledge of far vaster successes. He was to retain his net, but souls were to be the nobler prey. He was to buffet waves still, but they were to be the waves of human passion, and ignorance, and crime. He was to hoist his sail still on a more treacherous sea, but, with a mightier arm than his own guiding the helm, he would reach the heavenly shore with the unbroken net, and lay at his Redeemer's feet joyous multitudes rescued from the depths of ruin and despair.

Commentators have often marked, in the original Greek,

the power and beauty of the word here used by Jesus, and whose full meaning is so inadequately expressed by the term "catch" in our translation. It means to catch, not in order to kill and destroy, but to "catch alive," to catch in order to preserve and perpetuate life, or to raise it to a higher state of development.

Ah, wondrous encouragement to Peter, and to all who like Peter are entrusted with the net of the gospel! Ministers of Christ! here is your high prerogative, to raise the myriads which at the Saviour's word you capture—to raise them from the lower element, "the earth, earthy," to the higher and nobler and purer element of undying endless LIFE. If the analogy fail in the case of the humble spoil which then lay on the earthly shore, it is only that Christ, by the beauty of contrast, may bring out more vividly the true grandeur of the apostolate. It was as if He had said, "Peter, that net of thine has dragged its multitudes out of their briny depths, but they struggle and die in this new and hostile element. As they are cast on the beach, their tiny existence, the ephemeral life I gave them, terminates for ever. But different, far different, is *thine* embassy. At my command thou art to let down thy net. Myriads on myriads in the ocean depths of despair are to be the fruits of thy faithful toil and that of others; and no sooner do they leave their old element of guilt and depravity, than they begin to breathe a new and nobler life, immortal as my own."

Would that those of us who are "Fishers of men"—Ambassadors of Christ—could realise this vast, this incomparable work, with all its tremendous responsibilities and tremendous results! Death and life are here confided to us! Our aim is here represented to be, not a mere external varnishing over with new

habits, new tastes, new virtues; but to effect *a change of being.* The faithful preaching of the gospel ought to have for its object a bringing up and out from the deep, dead sea of nature; elevating to a new heaven-born atmosphere. Oh, LIFE is a solemn thing!—a solemn word! It is a solemn hour —every parent knows it—when a child is born into the world;—when the first infant cry breaks upon the ear, and tells that a little denizen has been added to the domain of life—a new heir of an endless imperishable being! And shall not that be a solemn and momentous event, when, at the second spiritual birth, the cry of the new creature is heard, "Lord, save me, I perish"—when the immortal spirit begins to breathe a new atmosphere, to share in the very Life of the Almighty who made him, and in the Resurrection-life of the Saviour who redeemed him? You are captured in the Gospel net, but it is to have *life* infused, the only thing worth calling life in a dead and dying world. I repeat it, the Gospel raises to a higher platform—it raises from the grovelling element of nature to the higher element of grace and glory. The little seed is in its element when, beneath the clod, it slumbers in darkness in its clay or mossy bed; but nobler is its new element, when it springs exultant from its prison house, and, arrayed in living green, bathes its new-born tints in the glorious sunlight. The caterpillar is in its native element when, embedded in its chrysalis state, it lies a torpid and forbidding groveller in its winter shell; but nobler is its destiny, when on wings of purple and gold it spurns its tiny sepulchre, and in resurrection attire speeds it from flower to flower. The earth is one mass of teeming life, living and moving, and turning on its axis, even when night wraps it

in its curtain, and deep sleep pervades its silent tenantry; but nobler surely is that life, when the sun lights up with living glory temple and tree, and rock and mountain, transforming lake and ocean into burnished gold, and man, its high priest, "goes forth to his work and his labour until the evening."

But what are these compared to the higher Life and Glory with which the immortal soul is invested, when the Great Spirit, brooding over its chaos, gives the summons, "Let there be light," "Let there be Life." Oh, that this might ever be the aim —the end—the glory of all preaching (perish all other)—to "catch men," not by human power or human eloquence—the wisdom of words—exalting ourselves at the expense of our Master—making the cross of Christ of none effect; but in faith and love and joyful hope, letting down the simple net—it may be with rude untutored hands, but doing so at the word of Christ, and with longing desire to bring immortal spirits safe to the heavenly shore, living trophies to cast at the Great Master's feet.

The ministers of Christ, in handling the gospel net, are apt at times to be discouraged. They have to mourn like Peter over hours of unavailing effort—Sabbaths when the net was (as they thought) in faith let down; but no result of their labours—no owning of their work. Yet we will not despair. "*Nevertheless at Thy word* we will still let down the net."

Others may resort to other expedients for the amelioration of man, solving the great problem of fretful, careworn, restless, suffering humanity apart from the gospel. The philosopher may dream of visionary earthly antidotes; the statesman may see in some cold, frigid, intellectual training a panacea for human wrongs; the moralist may discourse on human

virtue, and the self-rectifying power of human goodness; the Socialist may dare to propound his damning theories as the pioneers of the halcyon reign of unbounded liberty, but "nevertheless we will let down the net." We have boldness and confidence that Christ, and Him crucified, and the new life which this Lord of life has to impart, are the true and only secrets of peace on earth and good will to men.

See what that gospel has done already! mark its power and progress ever since that hour when on Tiberias shore Christ spake this authoritative word to these humble fishermen! How weak their efforts! how humble their instrumentality! What! a handful of uneducated men from the darkest of all the Palestine provinces, and one other converted Jew of Tarsus; who ever dreamt of these hurling superstition from her throne—silencing her oracles—demolishing the temples and shrines of ages—bringing the whole Roman empire, as by a magic touch, to own a crucified Saviour as its God and King?

What cannot grace do? Their first motto has been the motto of every faithful successor in the glorious company of apostles—"Nevertheless at Thy word we will let down the net." The ancestral splendours of our own ancient ritual is against us; the pomp and pride of imperial Rome is against us; the learning and philosophy of polished Greece is against us; the idolatries of Paganism, with their lust and revelry and blood, are against us; the heart of corrupted, degraded humanity is against us—"Nevertheless at Thy word we will let down the net."

Rome has conquered by her sword; Greece has rendered herself immortal by her triumphs of intellect. The Jew—

arrogant, fanatical—boasts of a descent from the world's aristocracy, and proudly clings to an abrogated ritual. But we, with the humblest instrumentality—an instrumentality of which the net of lowly fishermen is the befitting type—we will go forth on our accredited mission, feeling that herein lies the secret of all success—"Not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord God of Hosts." "It has pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe!" More than this, looking closely to this prophetic parable, we find that Christ, in calling human agents to be Fishers of men, not only divinely *appoints to* the office, and divinely *qualifies for* the office, but there is an exquisite significance in the accompanying act of the draught of fishes. It is a prophetic promise that men *shall* be enclosed; that His word shall not return to Him void; that the net of the kingdom shall not be let down in vain. It is the Lord himself giving the pledge, and symbol, and guarantee of success; and we shall find Him repeating the same with still greater significance, at the close of all—at His last visit to Gennesaret, ere He ascended to glory. Oh, yes! the letting down of that gospel-net, the filling it, the drawing it—is the Lord's work and not man's. "Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God who giveth the increase, that our faith may not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." The great and glorious history of apostolic preaching and ministerial success for the last 1800 years, may be given in the lofty words of the Psalmist; they are words that would seem more especially to take their date from the very hour of which we now speak, when Jesus stood on Gennesaret's shore—

when His omnipotent mandate moved the first wave—this impelling another, and another, and another still—until the glad gospel waters are now fast sweeping over the sands of time;—"The Lord gave the word—great was the company of those that published it. Kings of armies did flee apace, and she that tarried at home divided the spoil. Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

III. Let us observe the DISCIPLES' RESOLUTION—"*And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed Jesus.*"* Or as the same incident is recorded in the parallel passage in St Matthew's gospel—"And they straightway left their nets and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship, with Zebedee their father mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him."†

It is a solemn lesson of self-denial we are called on here to come and learn at the feet of Galilean fishermen. It was, it must have been for them, a trying hour. At a moment's warning their worldly *all* was to be left. The hallowed scenes of youth were around them. Every rock and ravine —every sheltered nook and bay in that lovely inland sea,— they knew it well. The Bethsaida hamlet, from which childhood was wont to rush in its sunny morning to welcome the father, as his boat rasped the shallows, after his night of toil in the lake, was full in view. Nay, we are expressly

* Luke v. 11. † Matt. iv. 21, 22.

told, that father's ear listened to the strange summons that implied separation from him and his home, probably for ever. They just had, moreover, their boats filled to overflowing. Elated with success, which they might have been perverse enough to attribute to ordinary causes, they never before had so strong inducement to cleave to their nets and prosecute their calling.

And for what were they to exchange their little all? It was to carry a heavy cross! It was to attach themselves to the person and fortunes of the reputed Son of a carpenter, who was often unable to tell of so secure a shelter as had the fox of the mountain or the bird of the forest! Yet they ("straightway") without deliberating—without conferring with flesh and blood—without reasoning on maxims of expediency —willingly surrendered that all, and cast in their lot with the despised and rejected One! "Follow me!" said their Lord; and with cheerful alacrity their boats, homes, friends, were left—"from henceforth they are fishers of men!"

Did they regret this noble adhesion? Were they sufferers by their self-sacrificing devotion? "Lo!" says Peter, on an after occasion, "we have left all and followed thee!" Jesus said in reply, "Verily I say unto you there is no man that hath left house or parents, or brethren or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life-everlasting!"

Ah! who ever suffered by casting in his lot with a suffering Saviour, and with joyful intrepidity following Jesus? "Would to God," said another great follower (unabashed by the regal purple before him in making his bold avowal)—

"would to God," said he, even though the clank of the chain on his own arm reminded of earthly bonds—"would to God you were not only almost but altogether such as I am!"*

Reader! have you followed—are you following Jesus as did these His first apostles? You are not called on, thank God, like them to follow Him in the spoilings of your earthly goods, or in the relinquishment of your earthly homes. To be a follower of Christ does not require huge sacrifices—brilliant displays of heroic suffering. I believe that meek Saviour is most honoured by those who bear most meekly what I might call *little* crosses, who, not in the great battle-field of the world, but in the quiet of their own homesteads, exhibit the lowly, submissive, patient spirit of cross-bearing disciples.

Look back on your past life—look even back on a single year, and can you point to any one action in the course of it, in which you are conscious of having made some little denial of self, because you thought that denial would be pleasing to Jesus? Can you tell of some passion you subdued—some lust you mortified—some kindly deed you performed, because you believed your Saviour would be honoured, and you were thereby doing His will? Can you tell of some sore affliction to which you bowed in meek and lowly submission, manifesting in your trial patience, and faith, and unmurmuring resignation, because you thought of an unmurmuring Saviour, and that your own cross was but as dust in the balance compared with His? Say, is not that following of your Lord self-rewarding and self-recompensing? "If any man serve me," says He, "let him follow me, and where I am there shall also my servant be; if any man serve

* Acts xxvi. 29.

me him will my Father honour!" Even if it be suffering and trial you are called to endure, what a privilege in this to "*follow Jesus.*" Yes! put the emphasis on these little words —"Follow Me." "They followed HIM!" Suffering believer! is it no solace in the midst of trial to think that you are following in the very footsteps of a suffering Saviour—that you, a poor, guilty, worthless sinner, are faring no worse than your Lord and Master did—the stainless, spotless, sinless, and withal unrepining Lamb of God?

Follow him fully—cast off every impediment—every lingering sin that would hamper you in His service. Go and shew that thou followest Him by thy deeds. It was not by tarrying at their nets, or lingering on the shores, that the disciples manifested their resolve to cast in their lot with the homeless Christ of Galilee! They *did* it. Ah! religion is not contemplation, but action. Religion is not a thing of mopish sentimentalism, or demure looks, or set phrases. It is launching forth into the deep of our own and the world's great necessities. It is letting down the net for a draught, and then, in conjunction with this earnest work, rising up and following the example, the footsteps, the word, the will of Jesus.

Arise, then, let us be going! We may, like the disciples in that first hour of their calling, be all in ignorance of a veiled and shadowed future; but, if like them, in the company of the Lord, we may fearlessly leave our fondest earthly treasures behind us, making but one conditional prayer, "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not hence." Following Him in His cross we shall at last be sharers with Him in His glorious crown, and reap the blessing which He elsewhere

promises to His Apostolic band, and through them to all who inherit a disciple-spirit. "Ye who have followed Me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

V.

The Incurable Cured.

He hears the crowd;—he hears a breath
Say, "It is Christ of Nazareth;"
And calls in tones of agony,
Ἰησοῦ ἐλέησόν με!

"When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him; saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."—MATT. viii. 1–5: MARK i. 40–45; LUKE v. 12–16.

7.

THE INCURABLE CURED.

A SERMON, succeeded by a miracle, formed, in the preceding chapters, our first introduction to the "Lake of Gennesaret"—the sermon to the multitudes preached from Simon's fishing boat, followed by the launching forth into the deep, the letting down of the nets, and the miraculous capture.

We have now another Miracle following a more illustrious Discourse still. The greatest of our Lord's sermons—the Sermon on the Mount—which of itself, independent of any other incidents, is sufficient to give an undying interest to these shores, had just been spoken;* He attests, as in the former case, His mighty words by mighty works, authenticates His teachings by "signs following."

He had been proclaiming heavenly Benedictions. He is now Himself "THE Merciful ONE"—the great source and fountain-head of compassion to exemplify and illustrate His utterances by one of the most marvellous of His deeds.

Let us, in the further exposition of this Gospel narrative, advert—

I. To *the Scene.*

II. To its *Great Lesson.*

* The author has been reluctantly obliged to omit a detailed exposition of this matchless effusion of heavenly wisdom—not the least interesting or instructive, certainly, of the "Memories of Gennesaret." To have done so, however, would have occupied more space than would be consistent with the limits of the present volume.

I. Recent travellers, and especially the most recent and trustworthy of all, have identified a mountain, standing alone in a green table-land, called the *Plain of Hattin*, on the west side of the Gennesaret lake, with the "Mount of Beatitudes," from whose two-horned top* the Saviour delivered His memorable sermon. This mountain is visible from all parts of the lake, its double or "bifurcated cone" mingling in every view of the diversified landscape. A deep ravine, known as "The *Wâdy Hymam*, or *Valley of Doves*,"† connects this level platform of Hattin and its mountain, with the plain of Gennesaret and the shores of the inland sea. As this retired yet elevated spot was easily accessible, we may imagine the Divine Redeemer often ascending it through the narrow mountain gorge. From the flowers that carpeted the ravine, and the doves or pigeons that built their nests on the branches overhead, He may have derived the imagery He employs in His sermon; when He speaks of the lilies as clothed, and the fowls of the air as ministered to by an unseen but gracious Provider.

He was in the act of returning in company with the vast multitude back towards Capernaum, when a strange and startling sight disclosed itself. What though flowers were clothing the earth, and birds singing among the branches? What though azure skies o'er-canopied them, and a Lake the image of peace was sleeping in quiet loveliness at their feet? One sight and wail of human misery now borne to their ears and confronting their eyes, too sadly reminded

* The modern name is, the "Horns of Hattin."—See *Stanley*, p. 364.

† "The Wady Hymam, the 'Valley of Doves,' so called, perhaps, from the perforations which still continue in the rocks: in Josephus' time, the stronghold of robbers; now, probably, of wild pigeons."—*Stanley*, p. 378.

them that sin had made this world a world of suffering—full, like the prophet's roll, of "lamentation, and mourning, and woe."

A miserable being, afflicted with the most loathsome and ignominious of diseases, had been brooding in silent thought (possibly for days—possibly for weeks) as to whether he might dare venture to cast himself at the feet of the wondrous Restorer. Vain to this lone and desolate spirit was all the beauty of that outer nature in the midst of which his existence had been spent. The curse of God was resting upon him. His brother man looked strange and alien upon him. From that ghastly countenance, rich and poor, young and old, fled affrighted. What to him were the thickly-studded towns and villages which fringed that scene of busy life;—he dared not so much as set foot in one of them; though born a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a child of Abraham; a sad anathema severed him from the privileges of the enfranchised nation. What though he saw and heard, spring after spring, at the passover season, joyful groups with songs on their lips going up to Jerusalem the city of solemnities; for him there was no place among "the multitude that kept holiday." Ceremonially unclean, he was by a terrible edict cut off from the congregation of the Lord. While others took sweet counsel together, and went to the house of God in company, he could only in the bitterest of captivities "weep when he remembered Zion!"

His lonesome home was either some secluded hut amid these Galilee mountains, or if he were permitted to associate with his fellows at all, it was a wretched confederacy with

other lepers like himself, who, in their exile communities, only recounted to each other the dismal story of their sufferings, and gazed on faces and frames more ghastly and mutilated than their own.*

But in what dreams cannot Hope indulge in life's dreariest exigencies? In such a case as the present, indeed, every vestige of such hope might well seem to have expired; not only was the disease itself inveterate, but this leper's was one of the worst types of it. St Luke speaks of him as "full of leprosy." Year after year he may have watched with the horror of despair the slow, silent, insidious progress of the wasting tetter, like an unseen vulture preying on his flesh — devouring limb by limb, member by member. He had become a loathsome and distorted shadow of what once he was. Life itself was a curse. It would have been to him a blessing to die.

But in that desolate bosom still lay some lingering sparks of hope—the last emotion of the human soul that expires. These were fanned into a faint glow by hearing of the wonders wrought by the Prophet of Galilee. A few weeks before, when the Sabbath's sun had sunk behind the western hills of the Lake; the lame, the sick, the diseased, the

* We read of the four lepers found together near Samaria, when it was besieged by Benhadad, also ten lepers in company close by "a certain village," whom the Saviour healed. Dr Robinson thus writes, "We reached the Zion gate just as it was opened at one o'clock: within the gate, a little towards the right, are some miserable hovels inhabited by persons called leprous. Whether this disease is or is not the leprosy of Scripture, we are unable to affirm, the symptoms described to us were similar to those called *Elephantiasis*. At any-rate they are pitiable objects, and miserable outcasts from society. They all live here together, and intermarry only with each other. The children are said to be healthy till they come of age, when the disease makes its appearance and gradually increases so long as the victim survives."—*Biblical Researches.*

dying, had been borne to the Capernaum home of this greater than human Physician. The result was, that that sun rose on the morrow on a healed city—disease had fled. Many an aching pillow and anguished heart had been exchanged for songs of deliverance!

Was the suggestion a strange or unnatural one which gathered strength in the bosom of this outcast Leper—"Can this same Saviour not heal *me?* Can *I alone* not feel His healing touch? Can that omnific word not reach this horrible plague—dash the life-long tear from this eye and pallor from this cheek—wrench away these rent clothes which (by a severe necessity) I am doomed to wear—open these portals and thresholds I am forbidden to enter—and send me forth a free man, to set my feet within thy gates, O Jerusalem?" All that he had that day seen and heard may have tended to strengthen his hopes and embolden his resolves. He may have been hovering with eager expectancy outside the crowd on the Mount of Beatitudes—screening himself behind the ledge of a rock or undulation of the hill—the calm silent air wafting to his ear some of the wondrous words of the Preacher! Did he listen to these opening sentences? Did they not appear as if meant for *him?* What! he would inwardly say—"blessings and benedictions poured on the 'meek,' the 'poor,' the 'persecuted,' the 'despised!' Did not Jesus of Nazareth speak, too, in His closing sentences, as if Omnipotence slumbered in His arm? Why should I set limits to combined power and mercy? I feel assured He is *able.* Is He *willing?* I shall try it—I shall test it! Crouching at the feet of this Prophet of Mercy, if I be spurned away, it is only what the past has taught me ofttimes to

endure. Yes! I, the most wretched of the wretched, will go and claim His pitying love, and throw this suffering body and suffering spirit imploringly at His feet." Thus did a ray of anxious hope dawn on the saddest bosom in all Galilee!

The time has arrived! The tramp of the multitude is heard. They are wending their way down one of the bye-paths to the lake side. In an instant the halting cripple, with head bare and clothes rent, and covering on his lip, bounds from his lurking-place. Shouting the terrible watchword—"*Unclean! —unclean!*"—to warn the crowd from his presence, he is prostrate in the dust, his face touching the garment-hem of the One only Being in the wide world from whom he has hope of cure.

It was a wondrous meeting! The two antipodes of being —the extremes of humanity—met at that moment in that Gennesaret road. It was a meeting of Mercy with Despair—Omnipotence with Weakness—Sympathy with Suffering—Purity with Pollution—Life with Death! Not more striking was the contrast in nature between the bleak, sterile, torn desert hills on the east of the lake and the fertile garden-slopes on its west, than between that rent and dislocated body and soul—that terrible monument of shattered humanity—and the calm Godlike Being who gazed lovingly down on the wretch who clutched the dust with his wasted fingers, uttering the wild lament of hereditary despair—yet mingling this with nobler accents, "*Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean!*"

Moment of thrilling suspense! The multitude—the disciples—panic-struck, may probably have recoiled from the forbidden contact; they may possibly have bidden the intruder away. ONE was there who had no such unkind or

unmerciful thought. Well did JESUS know all that terrible history! the touching story of years written in that ashen countenance! He put forth His finger—touched the body which no unleprous hand had ever before dared to approach! The Omnipotent "I WILL!" sounded forth, bearing on its wings words of healing. The scales dropped from his face—the flush of health mounted to his cheek—pain fled from his aching limbs. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles!"

And now we may imagine the multitude, with the restored Leper in their midst, entering the gates of Capernaum, telling to fresh crowds thronging around them of the new sermon and miracle they had just heard and witnessed. The one so full of tenderness and love—of comfort to the lowly and poor and meek; the other a display of power unparalleled since the days of Elisha and Naaman. What other evidence was needed that a great Prophet, indeed, had arisen in Israel? It was a twofold marvel even in that old land of miracle and prodigy—"the *Lepers* are cleansed, to the *poor* the gospel is preached!"

II. Let us now pass from the Scene to its great LESSON—*the Terribleness of Sin.*

We have frequent examples in the Old Testament dispensation, as well as in the course of the Saviour's teaching, of outward and visible objects being taken as exponents of moral and spiritual truths. Of all these emblems, whether in the animate or inanimate world, none was more terribly impressive and significant than the disease of LEPROSY. It is not only that we discern therein some strik-

ing resemblances to *Sin*—the great spiritual malady—and employ the one as illustrative of the other. These resemblances or analogies were no mere accidents. Leprosy was singled out by God himself from the vast catalogue of human diseases and sufferings, to keep before the eyes of His people of old a perpetual memorial of the vileness and awfulness of moral evil. The outer body was made by Him a mirror of the far deeper and darker taint in the soul. It was a silent preacher in the midst of the theocratic nation and to the end of time, testifying to the virulence of a more inveterate malady—that "from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in us, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores."* Although it by no means invariably followed that the lepers of Israel were afflicted with their dire plague in consequence of personal sin, yet we know also this to have been the case in several recorded instances, such as those of Miriam, Gehazi, and Uzziah. At all events the disease was regarded by the Jews as a mark of the Divine displeasure. They spoke of it as "the finger of God."† It was considered an outward and visible sign of inward disorganisation, guilt, and impurity.

But more than this—it was the sign of "DEATH." The prayer of Aaron, in behalf of Miriam, was, "Let her not be as one '*dead*,' of whom the flesh is half consumed."‡ By the express injunctions contained in the Levitical law, the Leper was obliged to attire himself in the garments of *death*. He had to wear rent clothes, the garb which mourners were in the habit of putting on for the dead. His head was to be bare, his upper lip covered—tokens also of grief for the *dead*.

* Isaiah i. 6. † See Trench, *in loc.* ‡ Numbers xii. 12.

He was to reckon himself thus *a dead man.* He wore these funereal trappings, as if bewailing his own dissolution—a walking sepulchre—a living corpse in a world of living men. His befitting exclamation might be, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of *death?*"

A learned writer, who has sifted this subject in all its bearings, informs us that this idea of leprosy as an emblem of Death, not only lingered in the Middle Ages among the Jews, but was transplanted, during the Crusades, along with the disease itself, into Europe and Christendom, where "it was usual to clothe the leper in a shroud, and to say for him the masses for the dead." *

The same parabolic meaning and intention may be still further traced in the rites employed on the occasion of cleansing a leper. These were precisely what were appointed for cleansing one who had been defiled by contact with a dead body—"the hyssop, the cedar-wood, and scarlet:" thus not only identifying leprosy with *Death,* but making restoration from it an image of life from the dead—a visible sign of what is thus translated into gospel language, "You hath He quickened who were *dead* in trespasses and in sins."

And to complete this terrible picture of the figurative and symbolic meaning of leprosy, the Leper was solemnly forbidden to enter the camp or city of God. This living impersonation of vileness and death was not allowed to stand in the temple courts, or mingle in the solemn festivals of Israel.—Nor was there any exemption—Miriam, the sister of Moses—Uzziah, with his kingly crown—had both to bow calmly to the stern statute. "God is not the God of the *dead,* but of the *living.*"

* See Trench, p. 214.

He thus solemnly declared, by debarring the ceremonially unclean from His holy camp and His holy City, that "evil cannot dwell with Him—that fools cannot stand in His presence" —that He cannot "look upon sin but with abhorrence;"—nay, by exclusion from the earthly Jerusalem courts, He would dimly shadow forth the awful truth, that into the courts of the heavenly Jerusalem nothing shall be admitted that "defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie."*

Solemn, indeed, was that journey which the Hebrew of old undertook, when, on the first appearance of the suspicious taint-spot (the possible precursor of a life of misery and shame), he hastened to God's appointed priest to submit to the testing scrutiny! If, after careful examination, the worst fears were realised—how agonising the moment when, in exchange for his wonted garment, the rent habiliments of death were fastened upon him, his head shaved, his lip covered, and the mournful plaint put into his mouth, with which he was, in all time to come, to warn every human footstep away, "Unclean! unclean!" Even if there had been the dim possibility of some subsequent cure, the bitterness of that hour would have been mitigated; but, superadded to all the other terrible features in the malady, was its *inveteracy*. The door of hope (so far as human remedies were concerned) was closed on the hapless victim; he was left to weep tears of disconsolate despair! Unless by some special intervention of Divine power, he was a Leper to the day of his death. The grave alone would close and terminate his sufferings. The disease was irremediable—ineradicable!

Have any, who read these pages, the leprosy of unforgiven

* The reader is referred to Mr Trench's entire dissertation on this subject.

and uncancelled guilt still cleaving to their souls? Mark this terrible picture of Sin—this Parable and Sacrament of *death!*—You are living a life of *death*, "dead while you live." Mourners are going about the streets lamenting their dead. "Weep not for them, but weep for yourselves." Let the dead bury their dead! Their funeral hour, the rites of sepulture, are soon over. But if you continue in your present state, what is Life to *you*, but a long funeral procession? You are bearing within you a dead soul, coffined in a dying body! Your throbbing heart, like a muffled-drum, beating "funeral marches to the grave!" Think of this, ye who are content to live on in your natural condition, unwashed, unjustified, unsanctified. LIFE—the only thing worth calling *life*—the life of God in the soul—extinct. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth *death*." Saddest of all, you stand, like the Leper, self-excluded and self-exiled from fellowship with God—an isolated being, debarred from sympathy and association with all that is holy and happy in the universe. It is bad enough when a man is avoided by his fellows—when, like another Cain, a brand is set upon his brow, and he has to flee society, to shrink in cowering shame from its glance. But what is that, compared to the fearful position of being exile and outcast from God and angels—from heaven and holiness—from peace and love—to be unbefriended by that Great Being, whose smile is happiness, whose glance of unutterable wrath is worse than death!

Oh, when I wish a picture of the *terribleness of sin*—when I seek in old Palestine—that land of type and parable—for some awful symbol or memento of God's abhorrence of guilt—I may see it in the fig-tree on the road to Bethphage,

scarred and blighted, with its coiled leaves and blasted stem; I may see it in the terrible desolation reigning on the Dead Sea shores; I may hear it in the roll of its briny waves, as they fret and murmur on the cheerless beach, telling the endless story of submerged cities and of retributive vengeance. But, more terrible and impressive still, when I stand on one of the by-ways of Galilee, and hearken to a parable spoken by that wretched outcast, with his squalid tatters and uncovered head, shut out from the gladsome light of other homes, doomed to listen to no music but the sad wail of tortured bodies and broken spirits like his own—standing afar off from the camp of God, friends and relatives shrinking back at his approach, the trappings and memorials of death indicating that the King of Terrors has already set his foot upon him, and claimed him as his prey! Terrible emblem surely of that gulph of separation which yawns, unbridged, between God and the sinner! Infinite Purity hiding His face from infinite guilt—disowning the very being He made once after His own image, because he has disowned *Him;*—leaving him to the tyranny of his own sins, consigning him, because he has consigned *himself*, to the terrors of the first and second death in one!

And add to all, that this sin of yours is *incurable* by human hand or human skill, as the leprosy of old laughed to scorn the power and skill and art of man. God alone, by a special act of mercy, could arrest the malady. When Naaman came to the king of Israel to demand a cure, the reply of the monarch indicated who alone had power to grant his request, "*Am I God* to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his *leprosy?*" * It is the

* 2 Kings v. 7.

same with Sin—it is incurable by earthly agency. An ocean of tears cannot cleanse it; human virtues and merits and penances cannot eradicate its deep, dark blot. Man or angel, beast of the earth, creeping thing or flying fowl, "the cattle on a thousand hills, and ten thousands of rivers of oil"—all would be of no avail to purchase freedom from the polluting taint. No hand but One can be stretched forth to save; no voice but One can bid the terrible scourge away! "LORD, be merciful to me; *heal my soul*, for I have sinned against thee."

Ah, if the leprosy-spot of sin be washed from our souls—if the sentence of death recorded within us be obliterated, and the new life, the Life of God, be begun in our hearts, this, this shall be our befitting confession, "THOU hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." "The living—even the living, he shall praise THEE, as I do this day!"

Ere we leave this memory of Tiberias, let us ponder, for our own spiritual profit and encouragement, two features here specially noticeable in the conduct of the poor outcast who cast himself at his Lord's feet.

I. Mark his *Prayer*—"LORD!" Prayer arrests the ear of God. The lispings of this castaway are heard by the Helper of all the helpless. Though wearied and exhausted with uttering a lengthened sermon, and though eager multitudes are thronging around Him, one voice, and that of the most wretched of Galileans, stays the footsteps of Jesus, draws a tear to His eye, and words of mercy from His lips.

Reader, learn the Power of *Prayer*. Christ's hand is never shortened, His ear is never heavy. He is no longer, indeed, personally nigh, as He was at Gennesaret; we cannot, as the Leper did, gaze on His countenance and bathe His feet with our tears; but faith can make the Mount of Beatitudes and the mount of Heaven equally near. Science is in these our days completing her vastest prodigy, by bringing the Old and the New World within whispering distance, defying three thousand miles of ocean to arrest the secret in its transit. But mightier far is the agency spoken of here. Prayer, swift as the electric spark or volleyed lightning, enters the ear of the God of Sabaoth. The message sent to Heaven is heard while we are yet speaking, and comes back fraught with blessings of peace and love and mercy.

Love Prayer—love to haunt the Mount of Beatitudes, the Mount of Blessings. Make the most, too, of the opportunities for prayer while you have them. If the Leper had suffered Jesus to pass now unapproached and unsolicited, he might never again have found Him traversing that way. If the cry of prayer had not now been uttered, he might have been doomed to return to his wretched home, to languish out the dregs of existence in hopeless despair. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near."

The time of *Sickness* is such a pathway where Jesus may be met; the hour of *Bereavement* is such a meeting-place with Jesus; the *House of prayer* is one of the pathways the Saviour loves to frequent; Sabbath after Sabbath Jesus comes down from his Mount of Beatitudes, scattering blessings as He passes. Remember each Sabbath may be His last—His concluding journey—the last time you can cast yourself at

His feet and implore His mercy. He loved the mount of Prayer Himself. Up that very ravine ofttimes did He wander to make the "mountain apart" His oratory; be it so with you; delight often to follow His steps, ascending the hill of the Lord, saying, "I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and the hill of frankincense."

II. Mark the Leper's *Faith*, "If Thou *wilt*, Thou *canst!*" He believed (and it is all the sinner requires to feel in casting himself at his Saviour's feet), Jesus' *ability* to effect his cure—"THOU CANST." He was convinced that the omnipotent Prophet of Galilee had only to utter the word, and the pangs of a dreary and dismal life would cease for ever.

"Human power," he seems to say, "and human skill are to me of no avail; I have tried every species of human cure, I have applied every balsam; I have sought, like Naaman, the waters of Israel, I have plunged again and again in Jordan's healing streams, but all in vain; still 'the whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint.' Jesus of Nazareth! I come to *Thee*, believing that Thy word is mightier than all the waters of Syria or Israel. There is a Physician before me who is better than the balm of Gilead. Oh, Thou who canst bind up the broken-hearted, and proclaim liberty to the captives, give me 'beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning!' Lord, save me! else I perish."

It is enough—"Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, I *will*, be thou clean, and immediately his leprosy departed from him."

One point remains still to be noticed. Jesus enjoined him

to "go straightway and shew himself to the priest, offering the gift that Moses commanded."* What meant this closing injunction?

We find, on reference to the Jewish law, that after the restored leper had satisfied the priest of an effectual cure having been wrought, this minister of God was appointed to take two birds. The one was to be killed, and its blood poured into an earthen vessel filled with running water; the other, tied with a scarlet thread and bunch of hyssop to a stick of cedar, was to be dipped into the earthen pitcher containing the mingled blood and water. With this the leper was sprinkled seven times, and then the living bird was set free to join its mates;—a significant emblem or symbol that the leper was now at liberty to resume that intercourse with his fellows, which, on account of his disease, had been long suspended.

Who can fail, in all this, to see a far deeper and more touching significancy? That bleeding bird, slain by the officiating priest, was a striking type and emblem of a nobler Sacrifice—blood of a nobler Victim, shed to wash out a moral taint, of which the leprosy (terrible as it was) was but a feeble shadow. Who can fail to have suggested (in the mingled contents of that earthen vessel) the recollection of the spear of old which pierced the side of the Innocent, and from which flowed out a running stream of "blood and water?"

But what of the other Bird, bound with its mysterious hyssop-bunch and ligament of red scarlet thread, and which was immersed in the crimson flood? We cannot mistake it.

* Matt. viii. 4.

Here, surely, is the type of the Sinner wearing the bonds and fastenings of the everlasting covenant, plunged in the Fountain of blood—that fountain "opened for sin and for uncleanness." Lo! he is free. That bird of old, fluttering and struggling in terror, flew away from the scene of death! With joyous wing it soared with its fellows up in the blue heavens, or perched with them on its native branches in the nearest thicket!

Beauteous emblem of the Sinner! "The Son has made him free, and he is free indeed." The blood and water have effected "the double cure:" the one *justifies*, the other *sanctifies*—the one delivers him from the *guilt*, the other from the *pollution* of sin. And now behold that once terrified spirit, with wings soiled and plumage ruffled, soaring upwards and onwards on the pinions of faith, and hope, and gospel freedom, singing up to heaven's gate its untiring song, "Unto Him that loved me and washed me from my sins in His own *blood*, to Him be glory and praise for ever and ever."

Yes; "to Him that *washed* me." *There* was the special feature in that wondrous type: the bird—the live bird—*dipped in the blood of his fellow!* It was not a bird dipped in the blood of lamb or goat, but in the blood of *one of its own mates*—one that had been nurtured, it may be, in the same nest, or that had perched and sung with it on the same bough!

Precious truth—Jesus our *Fellow-Man!* The blood in which our souls are washed is the blood not of incarnate Archangel or incarnate Seraph, but blood that flowed from a human side and human veins—from the Brother and the Friend of the race, THE MAN Christ Jesus.

The fellows of the Leper of old, his very friends and acquaintances, fled from him. Not so *our* Fellow-Man, our Brother on the Throne. He "commended His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners" (lepers) He died for us.* Are we ushered into this glorious liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free? Sprinkled with the twofold emblem of blood and water, are we spreading our wings, the wings of faith and prayer, heavenwards, singing the new song, "We are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God?" Beware of defiling yourselves with the leprous taint of Sin. It is contaminating—infectious. Its tendency is to spread; it will eat into the vital principle. If permitted, it will destroy the life of God in the soul.

Keep near the atoning Fountain; be ever repairing to your "Fellow's blood." The scarlet thread, the mark and badge of covenant mercy, has been put upon you; "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free."

* This recalls the touching story of the Moravian missionaries entering a Lazaretto. They knew the consequences of crossing that fatal portico—once within the gate, and, by a severe but perhaps necessary law, to avoid spreading infection, they never could return. These self-denying men counted the cost—life, friends, home, the world—all was forsaken that they might enter the terrible threshold, and unfold the news of salvation to the wretched inmates. "Greater love hath no man than this." But the love of the God-Man to sinners in a leper-world was greater still.

The lines in Cowper's simple but beautiful typical hymn set forth briefly the gospel meaning of this rite—

"Dipp'd in his fellow's blood,
The living bird went free;
The type, well understood,
Express'd the sinner's plea;
Described a guilty soul enlarged,
And by a Saviour's death discharged."

If there be one Reader of these pages who feels that, by reason of sin (it may be some recent plague-spot), he is a spiritual Leper—some deep, dark blot defiling the conscience, the sense of pardon obscured, the Divine face hidden—standing thereby excluded from the camp of God; go forthwith to the running stream—the perennial Fountain with its crimson tide—adopt as your own, the prayer of a sin-stricken Penitent, who had the leper and his cure in view when he uttered it—"Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; yea, wash me, and I shall be whiter than the snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice."

VI.

The Soldier and his Slave.

I mark'd a rainbow in the north,
What time the wild autumnal sun
From his dark veil at noon look'd forth,
As glorying in his course half-done.
* * * * *

Light flashes in the gloomiest sky,
And music in the dullest plain;
For there the lark is soaring high,
Over her flat and leafless reign.
* * * * *

Brighter than rainbow in the north,
More cheery than the matin lark,
Is the soft gleam of Christian worth,
Which on some holy house we mark.

"And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him."—MATT. viii. 5–14; LUKE vii. 1–11.

THE SOLDIER AND HIS SLAVE.

"THE Sun of Righteousness" had arisen on "Galilee of the Gentiles," the region and shadow of death, with "healing in His wings." From the summit of the Mount of Beatitudes, "to the poor" the Gospel had been preached. On the plain at its base, or by the shores of the Lake, a Leper had been cleansed. And now, no sooner had the Divine Philanthropist entered "His own city," than a new suitor is at His feet. A Roman officer, whose servant was stretched on a couch of pain and death, comes to receive fresh proof of the Divine benediction, so recently uttered—"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Let us look, FIRST, to the Suppliant's *previous History.*

He was "a Centurion," or captain in the army of Herod—stationed with a hundred men under his command in the barracks at Capernaum. We know nothing as to how long he had been resident in this town of Galilee. While there, however, he had become a Gentile proselyte. In his intercourse with the Jewish mind, he had been led to a knowledge of the true God. The bewildering Polytheism, the ancestral Religion of his own land, into which he had been initiated in youth, with its "lords many and gods many"—the heartless vices and growing profligacy of Roman manners—contrasted unfavourably with the sublime simplicity of the worship of Israel's one Jehovah, and the lofty morality inculcated by the Mosaic law. Had religion been with him merely a step-

ping-stone in professional advancement—life a struggle for pay and place—to stand well at the government Palace of Cesarea and Tiberias, he had only to become the sycophant of Herod, to swear by the gods of Olympus and the Capitol, and plunge into the vices of these libertine courts.

But in that vast Roman empire, God was preparing many minds for a kingdom whose glory and vastness the Cæsar had never dreamt of. One of these "hidden ones" was this Capernaum soldier. He looked beyond the glitter and pageantry of earthly pomp and power to more enduring realities, and sought to have the yawning gulph of his heart's deep necessities filled with the great, the good, and the true. The simple yet sublime revelations of the Hebrew theology, had thrown a flood of light on his path, and resolved many perplexities and doubts, whose solution he had vainly sought in his own mythological systems. An alien by birthright, he became by faith a child of Abraham; a stranger and foreigner, he had become a fellow-citizen with the household of God; and, better still, he lived under the influential power of that religion which he had espoused as his creed.

We are called upon here to observe, very notably in his case, how true Piety ennobles and elevates the character. Moralities—native virtues and amiabilities, indeed, may exist independent of religion, but these are purified and sanctified by grace. Religion dignifies the whole man. A landscape beautiful in itself, is glorified by sunlight. Natural virtues may, in themselves, be lovely and of good report; but when the soul in its actions and motives is pervaded and renovated by grace, it is like that same landscape bathed in sunshine, sparkling with a glory and beauty unpossessed before. Thus

did the fear of God operate in the case of this centurion. It made him a better Man, a better Friend, a better Master, and perhaps a better Soldier too.

Let us look to two of these attributes as illustrated in the narrative we are now considering.

(1.) He was a good *Neighbour*. "*He loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue;*" or, literally, "He hath built *the* synagogue for us."

Rooted was the hatred and scorn with which pagan nations regarded the nation of Israel. But this man had been taught, for its own and "the Fathers' sakes," to love it; and he gave the most substantial proof of the reality of this affection, for in the centre of Capernaum, or close by the shores of the Lake, rose conspicuous the *one* Synagogue of the town—a strange and unwonted memorial for a Gentile Roman to raise at his own expense.

See here how religion makes the soul unselfish! Many a man, if he be well personally, is indifferent how his neighbour or the world fares. Perhaps unloved and uncared for himself, he thinks there is the less call upon him to love or care for others. He is in the midst of those who have no great claim upon him. He is too glad of the excuse or apology for steering clear of what would touch his means, or invade his time, or burden him with new cares and responsibilities. It is the old plea, "Am I my brother's keeper?" "No! I will live for myself—I will clutch my gold the faster, and die amid hoards of plenty. I am a Gentile—the blood of old Romulus is in my veins—the memory of a proud line of heroes is my heir-loom. What care I for these dogs of Jews, these bigot Hebrews? I shall do Cæsar's work, and

pocket Cæsar's pay. I shall rear my villa on this lake, and have my yacht on its waters. I shall put to shame Herod's courtiers in the luxuries of my table, and the splendours of my retinue. What concern have I with these boors of Galilee? I am sent to curb their turbulent spirit. I will render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. What have I to do with rendering to their God the things that are God's?"

So speak many now, but so spake not this Great and Good Centurion. He had riches, and he would use these riches, not for self or sin, but for the glory of that great Being he had been led to revere. After consecrating his own soul as a living temple of faith, and love, and grateful obedience, he had upreared a sanctuary wherein his poorer fellow-citizens might serve the God of their fathers, and where they might read and hear that law which had made Him wiser and better than all his heathen teachers. The Roman soldier was sent to repress and subjugate by the sword, but the sword was sheathed, and he conquered by the weapon of kindness. He loved the nation he had been taught from his infancy to hate, and the God he served was now about to make good in his experience the old promise, "Them that bless Israel I will bless."

Himself and his servant being both by birth heathens, he felt as if he dared not personally approach the great Jewish Teacher. But he asks and willingly obtains the intervention of the elders of the city. He had proved to them a kind neighbour and generous benefactor. They are glad now of an opportunity of reciprocating his offices of regard. Though his presence in their town as an officer of the Roman army was a badge of their political servitude and degradation, yet

the law of gratitude and love triumphs over all party jealousies and national animosities. They joyfully undertake the task of mediators, and hasten with his errand to the Saviour's feet. The words of Jesus that morning on the Mount of Beatitudes had scarce died away, when they received, in the case of the Centurion, a touching fulfilment:—"Love ye your enemies, and do good, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest." *

(2.) *He was a kind Master.* The Synagogue-building might have been a piece of Roman ostentation—the monument which a vain man had erected in a foreign land to perpetuate his name, and secure for himself a brief remembrance. It might have been even worse: it might have been erected by the old Roman on the principle of later Romanists—as the price of a monster "indulgence," a sop wherewith to quiet conscience and hush suspicion, in the midst of vice, extortion, and profligacy. But far different was it in his case. The outer deeds of generosity and munificence had their counterpart in goodness of heart and a holy life. We follow him within the sacred threshold of his own homestead. It is all that we could have expected;—in happy conformity with his public character. The love whose field was the Jewish nation, had its centre and focus in the domestic hearth.

It is, indeed, a beautiful and touching picture which is here presented to us: An Officer seated by the bedside of his suffering servant, who was racked with torturing pain, "grievously tormented"—"ready to die."

* Luke vi. 35.

Death at all times is a solemn thing. Who better able to brave it than was the iron soldier of old Rome, familiar with it as he was, under its most fearful forms? But it is one thing to face it in the hour of battle—boldly to die a hero's death—and another to watch the slow and stealthy footstep of the grim Destroyer, as he creeps into our loved circles, and threatens to drag endeared inmates down to the abode of everlasting silence. That ghastly enemy confronts him now face to face, and threatens to sweep away "one dear to him" (or, as the word means, "highly valued," ἔντιμος). Though that valued one was but a *slave*, occupying a different relation to his Roman master from what the British servant does to a British master, we may well come and sit at the feet of this "Good Centurion," and learn lessons of kindness and affection to our inferiors and dependents.

Is there not a solemn reproof and reprimand to many a master and mistress, in the tear that stood in that Soldier's eye, and the heaving emotions that struggled for utterance in his bosom, as he sat, night by night, at the couch of his slave, and sought by word and deed to alleviate his sufferings? Pure religion and undefiled before God led him to stoop to these offices of lowly love. That blessed Redeemer, at whose feet he was about to cast himself, illustrated, at a subsequent period of His ministry, by a significant act, this duty of condescension and kindness—He washed His disciples' feet. He told them to "go and do likewise;" and His whole gospel breathes the precept, "Condescend to men of low estate."

Let Christian masters come to this house in Capernaum, and study the living picture there presented for imitation.

The Roman officer felt that a solemn tie which neither God nor nature, nor the memories of years, would suffer him to treat lightly, bound him to that dying Slave. He might, as thousands of old did, and as many do still, profit by the toil of their dependents during the best period of their lives, and then, in sinking health or failing strength, turn them adrift on a cold and cheerless world, denuding them of comforts at the very time these are most needed. We fear that in our own day such cases are to be found;—that not a few are verily guilty in this respect concerning their lowly brother or sister. If, amid the pitiless storms and biting cold of winter, we left our own home comforts, and visited many black and smouldering firesides in our vicinities, is it uncharitable to ask, Would no master or mistress stand rebuked at the bar of conscience and of God, by the disregarded prayer trembling on quivering lips—"Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth?"

But it was not so with the Centurion of Capernaum and his trusty dependent. Past fidelity is not thus to be recompensed. He cherishes the remembrance of years on years of faithful, unremitting servitude; and now he will change places for a time with the helpless sufferer; he will be himself as one that serveth, bending over that anguished pillow in offices of affection and solicitude.

Happy would it be for social life did Religion, more than it does, thus sanctify and hallow the bond uniting servant and master!—the Servant working under the lofty Christian motive, "I serve the Lord Christ;" the Master, knowing and remembering that he has a "Master also in

heaven,"—the spirit at least remaining of Boaz' salutation to his servants as they reaped his fields at Bethlehem:—He meeting them with the benediction, "The Lord bless you," and they responding, "The Lord bless thee!"

Such, then, is a glimpse into the character—the public and private life—of the man who now sent the urgent message to the Saviour in behalf of his servant, and who follows up the mission of the elders of the city by leaving the sick-bed he was tending, and prostrating himself at the Lord's feet. We wait with anxiety to learn the particulars of this interview.

Let us look, *first*, to *the Centurion's address to the Saviour.*

Two things are very observable in his conduct and words.

I. Observe his HUMILITY—"*Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof.*"

What words for a proud Roman to address to a poor Jew! The elders had just, a little before, reached Jesus with the centurion's message, enforcing it with the plea, that He *was* worthy for whom He should do this. But different is the humble Officer's own estimate: he felt that he was a "sinner of the Gentiles"—an alien from the commonwealth of Israel—having no heritage in the covenant promises and the temporal blessings therein included.

But he felt more than this. The deep things of God's law had been revealed to his inquiring spirit. He was convinced of the deficiency and defilement of his best obedience and holiest deeds, and with no disguised, or sembled, or counterfeit humility, he bends in lowliest abasement before "THE *Holy*

One." A higher wall of separation than the old conventional one between Jew and Gentile, separated between him and Infinite purity. He had, doubtless, become familiar with the person and character of the Saviour from His teachings and miracles in and around Capernaum. It may be, in the sumptuous synagogue which his own munificence had reared, he had himself been spectator of the cure of the Demoniac.* He must, doubtless, have heard of the miraculous Draught. He must have witnessed the results, at least, of that wondrous Sabbath evening, when disease, which in the morning had flapped its gloomy wings over many a household, at sunset fled by His mighty mandate away. It is more than likely, from his rank and position, that he knew the nobleman whose son in the same city had recently experienced the might of Christ's omnipotent word.† Would not the same Power that raised a son, raise a Roman bondslave? Was he not approaching One who knew no distinction between Jew and Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free?

It is, indeed, a lovely impersonation of Humility, to see this scion of proud Rome—a captain in her armies—one of those accustomed to wear contempt on his lip whenever the name of "Jew" was mentioned—laying aside the pride of name and rank and nation; forgetting that he had stood among the martial legions in the Campus Martius, or sat a guest at Herod's table; accustomed ever to command, seldom to obey;—rushing now, in the extremity of his unselfish sorrow, to the feet of the homeless Saviour—the carpenter's Son—the Companion of fishermen!

But while "God resisteth the proud," He "giveth grace to

* Luke iv. 33. † John iv. 46.

the humble." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." That half heathen worshipper and suppliant has his brow to this hour wreathed with laurel, which survives in imperishable glory, while the garlands of Roman triumphs and victors have faded into decay, and left no trace behind. He has a monument in the hearts of all loving Masters, and faithful Servants, and humble-hearted Christians. For "wherever the gospel is preached in all the world," there shall this, that this Roman officer hath done, be told as a memorial of him.

II. The *second* feature notable (most notable) in the Centurion's conduct, is his FAITH. Whenever there is Humility, there is the concomitant grace of Faith; as a tree sends its branches upwards in proportion as it strikes its roots downwards, so in proportion as a man is deep in humility, is he "strong in faith, giving glory to God."

The remarkable feature in this grace of the Centurion, and which drew such a tribute regarding it from the lips of Omniscience, was—that he solicited from Jesus, for the effecting of his servant's cure, nothing but *a word*. Unlike the nobleman who journeyed to Cana, and besought Jesus to "come down" to Capernaum and heal his son (imagining that the personal presence of the Healer by the sick-couch was indispensable), he requested no more than the mere utterance of the will of Omnipotence. He who of old said, amid brooding chaos, "Let there be light," had now but to give forth the mandate, Let there be *Life*, and returning health would mantle the cheeks, and the palsied hands be clasped in grateful thanksgiving.

Observe, too, as an interesting feature in the Soldier's Faith, it took its colour and character from his *Soldier-life*—"FOR,"

he adds, "*I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me.*" "I am myself a subaltern—I am accustomed to obey the Tribune, my superior officer; and the soldiers of my company, in a similar way, give prompt obedience to my orders. I say to this man go, and he goeth; to another come, and he cometh; and to my servant do this, and he doeth it."

The application of the appeal is evident: "If I, in this my worldly calling, have only in the name of Cæsar to speak and it is done—I believe, Lord, it is much more so with *Thee.* Sickness and Disease are Thy appointed messengers; they are Servants executing Thy behests; they come and go at Thy command; this palsy now chaining my servant down to his couch—bid it away:—trouble not Thyself to come and touch him, but even here, in this open street, utter the healing word, and I know the result—my servant shall be healed."

We may well cease to wonder at Christ denominating this a "*great* faith." Faith deals with the distant, the unseen, the impalpable, the intangible. It has been well defined, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." We are ever craving for the evidence of sense and sight; the demand of Thomas is one natural to these earthly hearts of ours, "Except I SEE . . . I shall not believe." But "Blessed," said the Lord, "are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." We, in this age of the Church, are in the position of that sick Servant at Capernaum. To the eye of sense we are separated from the Saviour. We see Him not—we can touch Him not—the hand cannot steal amid the crowd to catch His garment hem—we cannot hear His loved footsteps as of old on our thresholds; but Faith penetrates the invisible; the messenger—Prayer—meets Him

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY

in the streets of the New Jerusalem; and Faith and Prayer together, the twin delegates from His Church below, He has never yet sent empty away.

Reader, go in the spirit of that Faith to Him; believe in what He has done and what He is still willing to do. Go, and like the Centurion, beseech Him "instantly." Make the most of fleeting opportunities. Beware of abused responsibilities. Do not wait and linger until you effect some preliminary preparation. "Just as you are," with no posture but that of humility, and no prayer but the prayer of faith, cast yourself at His feet, saying, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief!" And the greater the measure of your faith, the larger and more munificent will be the recompense. Jesus tells the Soldier-suppliant that the answer vouchsafed will be commensurate with the degree of his faith—"As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee."

Having considered the feelings manifested by the Roman Centurion in addressing Jesus in behalf of his sick Servant, turn we now to the Saviour's comment on the conduct of this noble-minded Soldier, and to those practical lessons with which the subject is replete.

He announces, in connexion with this remarkable display of faith, *The inbringing of the Gentile nations*, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. AND I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."*

This Roman soldier was the earnest-sheaf of a mighty har-

* Matt. viii. 10, 11.

vest yet to be reaped from heathen lands—the first-fruits of that vast quarter of the globe where Christianity was in after-ages to set up its banners and gather its noblest trophies. In the case of the miraculous cure on the Leper, Jesus, it will be remembered, "*touched*" him. That leper was a Jew—a Hebrew by birth; the "touching" him, may be taken as emblematic of the Saviour's coming into personal contact with those of His own nation,—"He came to His own," though "His own received Him not." In the case of the present miracle, however, there was no immediate or personal contact with the subject of it. The Saviour spake *the distant word* and the Roman slave was cured. May not this have been designed as emblematic of those far off Gentiles and Gentile nations—millions on millions—who were never permitted, like Israel, to gaze on the Incarnate God, but who were, in after-ages, to experience the power and potency of His miraculous word and will?

"*Many shall come and shall sit down with Abraham!*" Startling utterance this surely to these Galileans; only surpassed by this Jewish Prophet and Teacher turning round and commending openly to the crowd, the faith of a Gentile as surpassing that even of the "peculiar people." He prefaces it with the word that marks something strange and unwonted, "VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU." Strange, indeed, to Jewish ears it was! That leper, miserable spectacle though he were, was descended from Abraham. He had the accents of the Hebrew tongue hanging on his lips—he might be able to point, as most Jews were, in the absence of any other heritage, to the sepulchre where lay the ashes of his fathers: but here was a ROMAN—the synonym of Enmity, Oppression, Profligacy;—

for, along with their conquering standards they had imported to the shores of that quiet Lake the crimes and vices of the capital. Could it be that such wild olive-branches were to be grafted into the native olive? that these Gentile wanderers are to be gathered by the Good Shepherd into one fold? these peoples so diverse, and for long considered so antagonistic, to be fused into one mass, and that out of this mass there is to arise *the Church of the future?* Yes; and this Roman officer and his slave are selected as the first of these "children of God scattered abroad" who are to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the new kingdom—the children of Abraham's faith, partakers in Abraham's promise, and finally to be sharers in Abraham's glorious reward.

There are many important reflections suggested by this memorable incident—we can only advert to two of these.

First, we are again taught the oft-repeated Scripture lesson, that *in every profession and occupation of life, a man may serve God.*

How often are people apt to plead their professions and worldly engagements as an apology for ungodliness! "I might have been a Christian," say many, "but for this adverse position in which I am placed in business. I might have been following a mother's teachings, and reaping the blessings of a mother's prayers; but, cast where I am, it is vain to think of a holy walk. I am, by a sad necessity, denied the happiness of a religious life."

How different it was with this Roman soldier! Not only, soldier as he was, did he fear God; but, it is very observable, he fed and nurtured his faith from *his military habits and*

experience. The old discipline and training of a Camp-life read to him a high spiritual lesson in approaching Christ—"FOR I am a man set under authority," &c.

Ah, it is beautiful when a man thus makes his trade or profession, whatever it be, suggestive of spiritual incentives and motives of action! David, in the most imperishable of poems, made his Shepherd-life beautifully to shadow forth his covenant relation to God, beholding in "the green pastures" and "still waters" to which he led his flock, a peaceful image of spiritual safety and repose. Listen to the apostle Paul, "the tentmaker," toiling with his own hands at the goats' hair canvass that he "might be chargeable to no man"—as he suspends his manual labour to write an epistle to the Church at Corinth, he borrows from his homely occupation encouragement for *their* hearts and his own, with regard to more enduring "tents"—"For we know that when this house of our earthly tent is taken down, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Or, at a later period, "I am an ambassador in bonds," said he, as he wrote with the heavy iron fettering his hand; but the chain suggests the glorious contrast, "the word of God is not bound."

And every profession may become suggestive of such and similar spiritual verities.

Is it the *Husbandman?* He can read in the golden Harvest an undying type and pledge of spiritual blessings as the result of faith and earnest diligence in the heavenly husbandry —that "in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

Is it the *Sailor?* Every wave that wafts him nearer the harbour may remind him of the vaster Voyage on which he

is embarked—warn him of the treacherous storms, and tell of the glorious security of the heavenly Port.

Is it the *Physician?* He is reminded, amid complicated troubles which perplex his experience and baffle his skill, of a Physician who, in a more inveterate trouble, can heal "*all* diseases."

Is it the *Merchant?* He is reminded by the very vicissitudes of trade—the ebbings and flowings in the tide of prosperity—of the need of securing an interest in a better possession, and more enduring riches than earth can give.

Is it the *Soldier?* He hears mightier bugle-notes sounding to arms, "It is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is your salvation nearer than when you believed!" He is reminded of a more gigantic battle-plain than the world's conflicting hosts ever occupied—and the need there is of taking to himself "the whole armour of God,"—"fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life."

It is striking to note that the first Gentile convert welcomed to the new spiritual kingdom—the first Gentile whose prayer was heard and whose slave was healed—was a EUROPEAN OFFICER;—the first of a noble army who have, in after-ages, joined the ranks of the faithful.

It is interesting, moreover, to know that he was not the only officer in the pay of Cæsar, who, at this era of the world, and in Palestine, was brought to fear God. We have another of similar rank—the centurion spoken of at the awful terminating scene of Gospel story, who, gazing up on the meek countenance of the Crucified, exclaimed, "Truly this is the Son of God!"

We read in a subsequent period of "Cornelius. a centurion

of the band called the Italian band," quartered with his men at the seat of government at Cæsarea, that he was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway."

We know how the apostle Paul, in his final imprisonment in Rome, melted the iron hearts of Nero's Imperial Guard. The very soldiers between whom the chained prisoner slept were touched by his sublime patience, his fervid prayers, his unflinching courage, his glorious hopes.

Thanks be to God, the army has never been without its number of "the good soldiers of Jesus Christ," from the time of this Roman centurion on the Lake of Galilee, down to the hour when Hedley Vicars was consigned to his Crimean, and Henry Lawrence to his Indian, grave. Brave hearts, unflinching in the hour of duty and death, have loved to cast their swords and shields at the foot of the Cross, and to glory, far above earthly triumphs, in that of the Roman, "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith."

We have thought of that Roman officer in connexion with his Faith and Kindness and Humility on *earth*. We may think of him *at this moment*—the battle of life long ago ended—the sword long ago slumbering in its scabbard—the watchfires of the nightly bivouac quenched for ever—the trumpet of battle hung mute in the heavenly halls—seated a fellow-guest with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and the noble army of prophets and patriarchs, apostles and martyrs, in the kingdom of glory—clothed in white robes, with the palms of a better and nobler VICTORY in their hands!

We may learn, as a SECOND lesson, that *Great Faith is fostered in the midst of difficulties.*

It would only be to rehearse what we have already said, to shew that this pre-eminent Faith of the Centurion was so reared and nurtured.

The fact of being a Roman by birth—a Pagan in religion—a Soldier by profession—formed a threefold impediment in the path of his spiritual life. But he manfully counted the cost, and, not only was victory obtained, but when he laid the spoils at his Lord's feet, that Saviour declared that Israel had need to blush for *their* faith, when placed side by side with that of the Gentile stranger.

It is of the very nature of Faith to grow in the midst of trials and obstacles. The greatest spiritual heroes of the past—those whose faith culminated highest—are they who "subdued kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire."* Plunge them into the deep, like the fabled hydra they seem to rise with renovated energy.

Noah's faith, how wondrous! battling against the taunts and ridicule of a scoffing world, and standing alone to buffet the storm for 120 years.

Abraham's faith was strongest in his most trying hour, when the son of his prayers—the child of promise—was doomed to perish by his own hand.

The faith of the eleven Disciples was never more remarkable than when—returning orphaned and bereaved from the Mount of Ascension—all they most loved vanished from their sight—left to battle an alien world alone! Yet, we read, "they returned to Jerusalem with great joy!"

*See a brief, but (like all that emanated from that gifted pen) a suggestive sermon on this subject by Rev. Frederick Robertson of Brighton. Second series.

Paul's faith never was stronger or more glorious than when the aged man was fettered in his dungeon, with almost certain death impending. "Nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him."

And every martyr at the stake, and every missionary in his gigantic task, has to bear the same testimony, that it was when the tempest was highest, and the battle loudest, they were "strong in faith, giving glory to God." The Oak is rooted firmest and fastest, that has been nurtured, not amid quiet climes and in the sheltering valley, but high on the mountain-side where it has had to wrestle with the storm. That is not vigorous training for the rower, when resting on his oar, his boat is borne down the descending stream. But his is the hardened sinew and brawny arm whose bark has to face the fiercest current, and struggle with contending wind and tide.

The great man and master-mind was once the boy at school, who bravely encountered difficulty and disadvantage; who wept hot tears over the baffling task, and dried them not till he conquered impediments, gaining mental and moral courage every step in his ascending way. So it is in the higher spiritual struggle. Bunyan's Christian, who scrambled and ran up the "Hill Difficulty," was found asleep on the "Enchanted ground."

Be not downcast, then, if difficulties and trials surround you in your heavenly life. They may be purposely placed there by God, to train and discipline you for higher developments of faith. If He calls you to "toiling in row-

ing," it may be to make you the hardier seaman—to lead you to lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees, and, above all, to drive you to a holier trust in Him who has the vessel and its destinies in His hand, and who, amid gathering clouds and darkened horizon, and crested billows, is ever uttering the mild rebuke to our misgivings—"Said I not unto thee, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?"

VII.

Three Portraits.

Pilgrim! burden'd with thy sin,
  Come the way to Zion's gate;
There, till mercy shut thee in,
  Knock, and weep, and watch, and wait.

Knock—He knows the sinner's cry;
  Weep—He loves the mourner's tears;
Watch—for saving grace is nigh;
  Wait—till heavenly light appears.

Hark! it is the Bridegroom's voice—
  Welcome, pilgrim! to thy rest;
Now within the gate rejoice,
  Safe, and seal'd, and bought, and blest.

"And one of the Pharisees desired Him that he would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster-box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." –Luke vii. 36–50.

THREE PORTRAITS.

In our last scene of busy life on the Shores of *Gennesaret*, we visited in thought the house of a Gentile officer in Capernaum, and were there taught the hallowed relation which ought ever to subsist between Master and Servant, rich and poor.

We have now a change of incident within the walls of the same city; where Hebrew synagogues and Hebrew dwellings mingled with the villas and mansions of Roman courtiers, and the palaces of Herodian princes.

In one of these Jewish houses the scene of our present narrative is laid. It is a Parable in real life. New phases of humanity here meet us, with which Jesus dealt; and in dealing with which, He has left behind important lessons for our guidance and instruction.

Of the many graphic Scenes, indeed, in Sacred story, we know not one more striking than that which is at present to engage our attention. It is a Picture amid Gospel Pictures. One ceases to wonder that the great Painters of the middle ages clung to it as a favourite subject for delineation. We have in the group itself—its lights and shadows—the individuality of its unique and contrasted characters—all that contributes to make a striking and powerful composition. Proceeding rapidly, as we are doing, through this portion of the gospel Picture-gallery, we dare not pass it by in silence. Other minor figures crowd the background, but there are *Three* which stand out from the inspired canvass in signifi-

cant prominence:—three impersonations of vastly diverse character.

In the foreground of all, and arresting first our attention, is the impersonation of lowly Penitence and Humility; close by, in bold contrast and antagonism, is the type of haughty supercilious Pride and Religious Formalism; and, thirdly, to complete the triad, and in still greater contrast, there is the Godlike Impersonation and essence of ineffable Tenderness, Compassion, Love.

The Weeping sinner, the Self-righteous Pharisee, the Great and Gracious Redeemer.

Let us for a little, with God's blessing, dwell on each of the three in their order.

(I.) The *first* figure which meets our eye in the picture is that of THE LOWLY PENITENT.

Her history is a brief one—soon told: "A woman in the city, which was a sinner." "THE *sinner*" was her opprobrious epithet! The guilt of a life of reprobacy and shame was branded on her brow. She was probably a Gentile—one of those unhappy outcasts from virtue and peace that had been imported to the Jewish lake by the loathsome corruption of Roman manners. The lawless vices of the capital being (as we know from contemporary history) too terribly let loose on her subject provinces.

All at once, however, her life has become changed. How she may have been prepared to undergo so vast a revolution in her history, we cannot tell. For years, it may be, her soul may have been struggling in vain to get free. Her heart may have been torn and tortured with the memories of a blighted past, and a miserable and abandoned present;

and yet she might know no faithful ear, perhaps, to which she might reveal the reality of her wretchedness. The sunny recollections of joyous and innocent childhood, and a happy home, may have mingled sadly with the thought of the agonised and broken hearts there left, from which she had torn herself for ever. A future of terrible and untold desolation rose before her. No Gadarene demoniac, more truly than she, went about "seeking rest and finding none."

But *Rest* she *has* found. Her base betrayers have crushed that bleeding heart under their feet—they mock her tears and scorn her self-reproaches. But One voice she has heard which has spoken peace to her troubled soul!

Where she first saw Jesus, we cannot tell. Where she first listened to those gracious balm-words which stanched her bleeding wounds, we know not. Could she have been in the crowd that day by the Lake-side, when the Lord of nature and grace spake so tenderly from the fisher's bark? Could she have lingered, on that more recent occasion, in the skirts of the multitude as, in the plain of Hattin, or from the Mount of Beatitudes, wondrous words of power, and wrath, and mercy, fell on her ears? Might she not have heard the stern utterance there pronounced in connexion with such sins as hers, "*The whole body shall be cast into hell?*" Might not she also have listened there to the *blessing* in reserve for the "poor in spirit," the "persecuted," the "mourner?" Might she not have heard that Great Restorer who had healed lepers and sick, rich and poor, noble and despised, say without reserve or condition—"Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened?" Or, is it not more probable still, that she may have listened

in Capernaum to that briefest but loveliest of all the Saviour's utterances spoken shortly before,* and which has for eighteen hundred years calmed the tempests in many storm-swept bosoms, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest? Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls? For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light?" "Are not these words, these *golden* words," she might say, "*just for* ME? They are all I require—all I have been seeking for! I am a 'WEARY one;' none but God in Heaven knows *how* weary! This heart of mine for years has been torn and broken. The burden of crimson sin has been weighing me down. Did I not hear Him say, 'Come to Me, I will give you *rest?* Ye shall find *rest* to your souls?'"

Might there not thus have been one echo at least to these soul-soothing words in that crowd? One ear listening which drank them in? One bosom sighing for that to which it had been ever before a stranger—a yoke which was easy, and a burden which was light?

But whatever were the occasion—wherever the scene, and the place, and the manner of her awaking from her sleep of death—she *had* been arrested, convicted, humbled, comforted; her conscience had been struck, her life of profligacy was loathed and abandoned for ever. Now, all her thoughts are about coming into personal converse with that Great Being who had brought her up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set her feet upon a Rock, and established her goings!

* Stier, *in loco.*

Who can picture all the reality of that season of deep conviction:—the tears she wept in secret over her life of infamy?—and if she now cherishes the humble hope that that terrible past is wondrously forgiven, how full is she still of trembling apprehensions! The scene in the text discloses to us the turning-point in her history. It is the struggle between *life* and *death*. In the anguish of her newly-awakened and deeply-stricken heart, she has long been making the patriarch's prayer her own—"Oh! that I knew where I might find HIM, that I might come even to His seat!"

Her cherished wish is now to be gratified. Such an opportunity for seeing the Saviour does now occur. She had heard that He was guest that afternoon in a rich Pharisee's house. The doors of the dining-hall (according to Eastern custom) were open. Could she not creep unbidden behind where He was, and weep at His feet the tale of her sorrows? Yet manifold, and diverse too, are the struggles before she dare venture thither. Two impediments, especially, must have powerfully deterred her.

There was, *first*, that which many a penitent transgressor still feels—*the fear of others*. The dread of cruel censure, contempt, and scorn. She seems to have had the curse of an unenviable notoriety resting upon her. May she not be spurned away? May not that drooping heart, opening to the gladsome sunlight, be trodden under foot by merciless man?

Then add to this the torturing thought—*how can she face the infinitely* PURE ONE? She seems to say, "Can I, dare I, venture into the presence of Incarnate holiness? Can He endure my defiling touch? Will He deign to receive me;

to cast on me one look of pity—to utter one word of compassion? May I not only aggravate the tortures of this heart by listening to merited upbraidings, by hearing that 'Rest' there is for the 'weary,' for *every* weary head, but mine, and such as mine!"

But what will a soul *in earnest* not do? What barriers can restrain it? Frown who may, she resolves to repair to that "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness;" and to tell her story by those tears which had been "her meat, day and night," since she first listened to her Saviour's words.

She enters the house. Silently she steals behind the couch where the Lord reclined. If the other guests have been observing her—if the whisper and comment of indignation is passing round from lip to lip—it matters not to *her*. She hears it not, and cares not though she hears. JESUS IS THERE! She thinks of no one in the assembly but the Refuge of the weary, the Help of the helpless, the Friend of the friendless. Her eye rests on Him alone. She has found "Him whom her soul loveth." "He is all her salvation, and all her desire."

See her now, in her lowly lurking-place. Not a word is spoken. Her burning tear-drops (what Augustine calls "the blood of her heart")* are left to speak for her. They fall on her Saviour's unsandalled feet. On these feet she imprints her kisses, and dries them with the dishevelled hair of her head. An act, it is worthy of observation, which was performed only by the meanest female slaves in Rome to their masters. In this poor sinner's case, therefore, it was significant. Branded with contumely by *man*, she fled to

* Quoted by Trench.

the *God-Man.* That trembling Penitent casting herself at her heavenly Master's feet, seems rejoicingly to say, "O Lord, truly I am Thy SLAVE, I am Thy SLAVE; Thou hast loosed my bonds."

And as if this were not all, a Box of fragrant perfume, which she had procured, probably to lavish on her own person in the days of her shame, she now breaks, and pours on the feet she had moistened with weeping. As we behold the loosened tresses (what Paul speaks of as "the glory of woman"), now spurning all adornment, and the fragments of the alabaster-box scattered around, this Niöbe of Holy Writ seems to have anticipated the same apostle's injunction to other similar penitents, and to be acting upon it—"As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."*

Oh, beautiful type! Marvellous picture of broken-hearted sorrow! A poor outcast of wretchedness lying low at the cross; her footpath thither saturated with dewy tears. A miserable wreck of humanity who had broken loose from her moorings, drifting helpless, hopeless, ruined, lost, to the bleak winds and howling sea of eternity, now moored to the Great Living Rock. There was joy in Heaven that day, among the angels of God, over that *one sinner that repented!*

Pass we on now to the *second* Portrait in this Gospel-picture.

Can there be conceived a greater contrast and transition? From one low in the dust of self-abasement, confessing her-

* Rom. vi. 19.

self the chief of sinners, to one who is the type and portraiture of haughty self-righteous formalism! The host at this entertainment was a PHARISEE.

Little or nothing is said of him in the narrative, to throw any distinctive light on his history. We have no reason to believe that he was, by any means, a disreputable specimen of his class. Had he been so, our blessed Lord would have been more unqualified in His condemnation. He was no Sceptic. Neither profanity nor immorality probably could be laid to his charge. Multitudes of such were round about that Lake; profligate Gentiles, scoffing Romans, rationalistic Sadducees. But he was very different. He was, for aught we know, a good Moral man. He was a Synagogue attender. The very fact of having Jesus as his guest intimated a respect for religious Teaching. He was punctilious in Synagogue services and Ceremonial rites. The only incidental glimpse, indeed, the narrative gives of his character, indicates this much—he marvelled that if Christ were truly a prophet, gifted with the discernment of spirits, He did not shrink from the unclean *touch* of the sinner at His feet. He spake within himself, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman this is, that toucheth him." He speaks not of the Magdalene as the woman who "weepeth," or "kisseth," or "anointeth," or "loveth," but as the woman that "*toucheth*."*

He was then, externally to a Jew, all that could be wished. He "thanked God that he was not as others." He tithed all he possessed with scrupulous nicety. He could boast, it may be, of the broadest phylactery in Capernaum. He was a pupil of

* See Alford and Stier, *in loco*.

Hillels, or, perhaps, made it matter of thankfulness that it was *not* Hillel, but Shammai, at whose feet he had sat, and whose spirit he had imbibed. He made it his boast that he never had any dealings with the Samaritans; that far off as Mount Zion was, he had ever shunned, as defiled, their temple on Gerizim; and in going up to the annual feasts, rather than run the risk of contamination, he would take the circuit of the Jordan route to avoid it. No, no; other Jews might shew a latitudinarian spirit and have dealings with Samaritans; never would he! Others might believe in the sincerity of a Publican smiting on his breast and confessing himself a sinner, and God hearing that prayer; never could he! And as for condescending so much as to touch this Gentile Sinner, this wretched offscouring of Roman profligacy, it would defile and contaminate him—it would be a blot on his pedigree as the child of Abraham. He had conscientious objections to take the Jewish children's bread and cast it to Gentile dogs!

Jesus saw what was passing in the narrow, shrivelled soul of this turbaned Rel'g'onist; indeed, but for a brief and sententious parable, which the merciful Philanthropist interposed, the Pharisee-host might have bid away the poor suppliant from his home and table. "O Simon!" says a learned commentator, "wert thou not a poor sinner, Jesus would not have come to thy table; had not this woman been a penitent sinner, she would not have sought Him in thy house. Oh, that thou knewest what a Saviour He is—how He knows thee and her: her repentance—thy pride!"

Is not this Jewish Pharisee a "Representative man"—a type still of his Class? In him we have one of those cold,

heartless spirits who have an outward respect for conventional Religious Forms, but have no corresponding realisation of the exceeding breadth of God's law, and the exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts. They see sin in *others*, but *they* are all as they should be; they can pull out the mote in their brother's eye, but they have no thought of a beam in their own. Champions for sect and party—orthodox, as they firmly believe, in their own creed—all the world are wrong, or may be wrong, but *they* are sure they are right. Their Church is the pure one. They can trace their pedigree to apostles. Others have altered their rubrics; they never have. Others seem to live on enthusiasm; they can take Religion easy, and get into Heaven notwithstanding. There are *poor* at their doors, why not let the Law or Police look after them? If a miserable transgressor comes in their path, they hold it would not be *respectable* to have dealings with him; if a brother, overtaken in a fault, comes with the hot tears of grief pleading for forgiveness, they think it best to have nothing to say to him. It may do for a good Samaritan to pick up that wounded man; but, being Jews, they would contract defilement by touching him. They are sorry for him; but, shaking their heads and sighing, they leave him to the tender mercies of others, and "pass by on the other side!"

Let us beware of this cold, selfish, proud spirit. If there be anything more obnoxious to God, more withering to all that is noble in the human soul, it is this—the gilding of the outside of the cup and platter—the whitewash of the moral sepulchre—the Religion which begins and centres and terminates in self, and whose culminating glory is the complacent thought, "I am better than others. Stand back. I am holier than thou!"

The Omniscient Saviour sent the arrow of conviction to this Pharisee's conscience. Like another Nathan, self-judged and self-condemned, he brought home the verdict, "*thou art the man.*" He would do the same to every one of us, who in the shadings of this picture may see any dim reflection of himself. He who knew all the deep labyrinths of the human heart thus gives in another place His estimate of self-righteous, Pharisaic formalism, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

But let us pass on to the *third* and last principal figure in our Picture. In the centre of the group (between the two we have described), is the Living and All-glorious type of human Tenderness and Love—an exalted SAVIOUR GOD.

We wait anxiously to mark how He receives the trembling Transgressor. Are her fears well founded? Are her sobs to die away in empty echoes within these walls? Ah! if it had been man—selfish, haughty, unfeeling man—away, spurned and broken-hearted, she would have been sent; but "My ways are not as your ways, nor My thoughts as your thoughts, saith the Lord!"

At first He speaks not—He leaves her in silence to exhaust her tribute of sorrow and love. The sluices of her heart being only opened, He lets the flood of tears rush on unchecked. But He *does* break silence—He can bear and brook no longer the cruel frowns and taunting looks of those around. With what feelings must the broken-hearted one have listened to the tones of ever-living love, as thus He (yes, HE the *Lord of glory*) spake in behalf of the vilest of sinners.

"Simon," said he, addressing the Pharisee, "I have somewhat to say unto thee. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged." He turns then round in meek majesty to the Penitent, and applies the simple but expressive rebuke. "Seest thou," he continued to Simon, "this woman? I entered, a weary Stranger, into thy house. In accordance with customary wont—the rites of ancient hospitality—thou or thy servants should have afforded Me water for My feet: this was denied Me: but *thy* neglect or inconsideration was more than supplied by *her*. From the welling fountains of her grief she has bathed My feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. *Thou* gavest Me no kiss—this wonted courtesy to a Jewish Rabbi thou hast, from motives of calculating prudence, withheld from Me; but she, ever since she crept behind this table, has not ceased to kiss My feet. My head even with common olive oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed not My head, but My very feet, and that, too, with costliest spikenard. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

And now follows the gracious, longed-for word to the listening Penitent. Now comes her own assurance of comfort and joy—"THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN." . . "*Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.*" Her Lord has received her,

looked upon her, defended her, assured her, *forgiven* her, and now He sends her away with the coveted benediction. She came weary to Him, and He has not belied His own sure word, for she *has* received "REST" for her burdened soul.

Most lovely picture, we again say, this of the Saviour of the world, with that despised, down-trodden, forlorn FEMALE at His feet! We have here a living type and embodiment of what Christianity has done to wipe the tears from degraded womanhood, and raise her from the dust to which paganism had doomed her. What is the boasted Chivalry of the middle ages, but the legitimate effect of the elevating spirit of Christianity? Wherever Christianity is not, *there* is woman found with the curse of bondage and degradation resting upon her—the drudge and menial slave, instead of the helpmeet and companion of man. The first words that our Lord uttered when He rose from the grave were addressed to a whole world in tears—"WOMAN! why weepest thou?" And He could point to that vacant sepulchre He had just left as the certain pledge, amid higher blessings, that ere long these tears would be dried. O Jesus! *Woman* (personated by that poor Penitent in the text) may well come and lie adoring at Thy feet. Thy religion has been the breaker of her chains and the balm of her sorrows: we cease now to wonder that she was last at Thy cross and first at Thy tomb!

Let us pass on to one or two practical Lessons which this narrative suggests. We may take *three* which have reference to Great Sinners.

I. We learn that *for Great Sinners there is a Great Saviour.*

Here is THE *Lesson* of all lessons. We have been studying this Picture figure by figure, but like the ancient Painters we must be jealous of detracting from what, after all, is the Central glory of it. All the other parts must be subordinated to One—all other figures must only be brought in as helps to tell the story of HIS exceeding love.

Yes! JESUS is the Chief Speaker here; and, "chief of sinners," He speaks to *you!* He tells you in words and deeds of unutterable tenderness, that you never need despair of His mercy!—that for "scarlet sins" and "crimson sins" there is an ever opened fountain. "*This man receiveth sinners,*" was the ironical taunt of proud and haughty Pharisees. "*This man receiveth sinners,*" is the Saviour's own motto—the glorious peculiarity of His great salvation! Hear it, ye who are bowed down with an overwhelming sense of some heinous sins! there may be one such whose eye is falling on these pages; some troubled miserable being—shivering on the verge of despair—an awful past frowning upon you—spectres of guilt haunting you by night, and the scorpion sting of conscience goading you by day;—hiding your fears from those nearest and dearest to you; your heart alone knowing its own bitterness—the awful unrest of unforgiven and unmortified sin! I am commissioned this day to lead you to this Picture in the great gallery of Truth—to point to that vicious Profligate with the blood of souls on her head, and to tell you she trembled and wept, and believed and rejoiced! Hers was the worst supposable case. No sheep in all the Galilee fold more outcast, worthless, self-condemned than she; and yet—see the kind Shepherd! He

had followed after her (it may be for years on years), tracking her guilty steps as she rushed farther and farther from the fold, but He ceased not "until He found her;" and when He *had* found her, He laid her on His shoulders rejoicing, saying "Rejoice with me, for I have found the sheep which was lost!"

The Pharisees' axiom (and still the creed and verdict of many) is—"God can have no dealing with such vile sinners." He *can*—He *does!* Remember, it is not the Sinner He hates, but *Sin.* He loves the sinner. He gave His Son to die for the sinner, to shew *how* He loves him! What other proof of this do we need when we have the Cross of Calvary? "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Him and live." If you are saying now, as you contemplate that picture of anguished Penitence and Redeeming Love, "Would it were the same with *me!*" I answer unhesitatingly, "It *may* be the same; with God's grace it *shall* be the same! Come! ye whose sins are of the deepest dye—the memories of the past, memories of guilt and loathing and self-reproach—your hearts restless and anguished as you stoop over the dark abyss; put this picture before your mental eye—keep it there—hang it upon your heart-walls—ponder it in your hours of conviction and your hours of despair—suspend it above your death-pillows, and write under it as its name and inscription —"*Where sin abounded* GRACE *did much more abound!*""

I. Learn that *toward Great Sinners there ought to be shewn great tenderness.*

It is often not so with man. There is often a mean pleasure in spurning the transgressor from our presence—recall-

ing the memory of sin—loading with cutting rebuke and upbraidings—when a kind word and kind act might reclaim from the paths of vice and soothe a shattered and a broken heart!

Yes, I fearlessly say it, there is often a harsh unwillingness to make allowance for circumstances—for the power of temptation and the seductions of a guilty world. How often is this the case with the wretched outcasts of whom the woman in the text is the type! Society frowns on them (*that* we dare not blame); but is there to be left no room for repentance and for tears? If another such weeping Magdalene, as in the text, is to implore a kind look, after years of anguished penitence, are these tears to be cruelly mocked, and is she to turn her head to the grave as the only rest and resting-place for her woe? Is a brother to turn an erring sister from his gates? Can a parent read this story of redeeming mercy, and let the iron enter deeper into the heart of his penitent and exiled child? Yet how often is it so, and this all the while (oh! the cruel and base injustice of public morality)—while *man*—the base seducer—who murdered the peace of innocent households, and brought a father and mothers' gray hairs in sorrow to the grave—while *he* is permitted to strut unbranded on the world's highway! The world's doors are open to him—the lounges of fashion he can frequent—he can clasp still the young hand of virtue, and whirl with it in the giddy dance; the victims of his sin meanwhile left to pine in broken-hearted misery—unwept for—unsolaced! One's heart burns with indignation at the hollow baseness of this too truthful picture of what is called "*fashionable life.*" I ask you whether

should that deserted woman, shivering in the ragged tatters of penury in her wretched garret, or her destroyer, moving amid the lights and halls of luxury—whether is that poor, broken-down, battered flower, with its soiled and withered leaves, or he that has crushed its young tendrils under foot, and left it to rot and consume in the delirium of despair—which of these two is most hated in the sight of God—which of these two ought to be most branded in the eye of man?

You may remember another similar Victim of guilt and shame hurried into the presence of Christ. Her cruel-hearted accusers were all loud in her condemnation; till Jesus, by a personal appeal to their consciences silenced their clamour, and pronounced the milder verdict—"*Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more.*" Let us come to this Parable-picture, and learn a lesson of *tenderness to the erring.* Learn it from Him who is our great Exemplar. "He will not break the bruised reed—He will not quench the smoking flax." We have often truly reason to say "Let me not fall into the hands of man." But "ye have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." To every weeping, broken-hearted Penitent, lying low at His cross and nailing his or her sins there, He says, "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness; your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more!"

III. Learn that FROM *Great Sinners God expects great gratitude and love.*

This Woman's sins, which were many, were "all forgiven," and, as a consequence, "she loved much."

We must not, from aught I have said, be tempted to infer

that Christ in any degree winks at sin. The stupendous journey He undertook from the heights of glory to the depths of humiliation refutes at once the thought! If Sin, great or small, were a trivial thing in the eye of God, think ye that He would have exacted a penalty of such untold anguish from the Son of His love? Equally abhorrent must be the thought of continuing in sin because such grace abounds. Would not this be to represent a holy God as the great Patron of iniquity? Would it not be to make the entire Incarnation work one gigantic effort to relax the penalties of the law, and let the transgressor violate it with impunity? We repel the thought, as Paul repelled it, with an indignant "God forbid!"

Let those who have been thus graciously forgiven, and "forgiven much"—who by the free grace and tender mercy of God have had such a full, free, everlasting remission tendered them—let such shew by holy living and holy acting—by contrition and humility, by kindness and gentleness and unselfishness, by love to God and love to man—the depth of their gratitude to Him who has dealt with them as the tenderest earthly father never dealt with his dearest and fondest child. This lowly Penitent in the text, as she crouches tremblingly and lovingly at the feet of Jesus, with the mingled remembrance of great guilt and great forgiveness, lavishes upon Him *her best!* She may have had nothing else to offer. The sole treasure of a wretched home, she plucked from her bosom and poured its fragrant contents on the feet of her pilgrim Redeemer!

She seems to speak to every crimson and scarlet Transgres-

sor, who, heart-sick with sin—stricken down by the terrors of the law—the verities of the second death—the awful other world—has rushed to the only Ark of safety, the sheltering Covert for the weary and heavy laden! She seems to say, "Give Him—oh! give Him—not the crumbs and dregs, not the sweepings and remnants of 'a worn and withered love,' but let your tribute offering be, to the full measure of your ability, commensurate with the magnitude of that forgiving mercy which has borne the mighty load away into a land of oblivion!"

Reader! Is the sweet music of that word now falling on your ear—"Sinner! *thy sins are forgiven?*" Grace has called thee!—Love has redeemed thee!—Blood has washed thee!—Peace is bequeathed to thee!—Heaven is before thee! Be it yours to reply, "'Lord! I am Thine!' My love to Thee—that cold callous thing which we call *love*—is but as a drop in the ocean of Thy tenderness. But here I am! Take me, use me for Thy glory! This body, long a dark, desecrated shrine, full of loathsome pollution, sanctify it as a Temple to Thy praise. This soul, that has been long grovelling in the dust, wallowing in the mire of its earthliness and sin, bring back to it the lost image and lineaments of Thy great Self! This Life—this existence reclaimed by Thee from the blank chaos of death and despair—oh! let it be one never-ending Thank-offering of gratitude to Him who hath 'loved me with an everlasting love.' And *Death!*—when that solemn moment draws nigh, which I once shuddered to name—'My *death!*'—let it be the sweet triumph-hour of a spirit at peace with its God! As I confront the once dreaded water-floods, let

me hear the old word which on earth I loved so well. Let me hear it come floating across the dark billows, glorious with the new impress and meaning of Heaven; yet still spoken by Him who died, that *to* me and *for* me He might utter it, as He stands beckoning on the heavenly Shore—'COME UNTO ME, THOU WEARY ONE, AND I WILL GIVE THEE REST!'"

VIII.

The Sower and the Seed.

Oft as thy word, O God, is cast,
Like seed into the ground,
Let the rich dews of heaven descend,
And righteous fruits abound.

Let not the ever-watchful foe
This holy seed remove,
But give it root in every heart
To bring forth fruits of love.

Let not the world's deceitful cares
The living Word destroy,
But let it yield a hundredfold
Of peace and faith and joy.

"Behold a sower went forth to sow."—MATT. xiii.; MARK iv. 1; LUKE viii. 4.

THE SOWER AND THE SEED.

We have hitherto been engaged mainly in witnessing our Lord's miracles of power, or in listening to His utterances of mercy and compassion on the shores of the Galilean Sea. We have, in the present chapter, a remarkable specimen of a favourite method, which often and again on subsequent occasions He adopted, in unfolding the mysteries of His kingdom—viz., teaching BY PARABLE.

The Treasure-house of Creation is taken to interpret the doctrines of Grace;—Pictures hung in the outer world, and on which the eye of Jew and Gentile had gazed a thousand times, unconscious of their containing any spiritual suggestions, are transferred by Him to the walls of the Gospel Temple, and there pointed to by the Lord of both kingdoms as illustrators of Divine truths. The hills and fields, the corn and trees, the flowers and waters, are employed as exponents of heavenly verities. *The ordinary* lessons of His kingdom, indeed, and especially warnings to the obdurate and impenitent, are still to be conveyed in the old familiar vehicle of plain unvarnished language. He arrays the startling judgment truths of the preceding chapter, in St Matthew, in no mystic drapery. He attempts no proverb when exposing the guilt of hypocrites and announcing their doom. But when He would unfold the "state secrets" of His kingdom, He puts "apples of gold in pictures of silver." He

adopts a cycle of parabolic emblems to instruct His Church till the end of time.

The *first Four* were spoken from a fishing-boat to a vast throng assembled by the sea-side. The remaining *three* were uttered immediately afterwards to the disciples in a private house in Capernaum. Beautiful is the unity, and most natural the sequence, of these seven vivid similitudes, in that parable-chapter;—beginning with the incipient act of the Kingdom, the "Sower sowing the Seed," and ending with the emptying of the Draw-net—fetching the Redeemed multitudes, at the time of consummation, home to the heavenly shore.

It is the opening one of the series, *the Parable of the Sower*, which alone we shall consider, as a specimen of the others.

"Is there anything on the spot to suggest the image thus conveyed?" "So," says a recent traveller, "I asked, as I rode along the track under the hill-side by which the Plain of Gennesareth is approached. So I asked at the moment, seeing nothing but the steep sides of the hill alternately of rock and grass. And when I thought of the Parable of the Sower, I answered that here, at least, was nothing on which the Divine teaching could fasten; it must have been the distant corn-fields of Samaria or Esdraelon on which Christ's mind was dwelling. The thought had hardly occurred to me when a slight recess in the hill-side, close upon the plain, disclosed at once in detail, and with a conjunction which I remember no where else in Palestine, every feature of the Great Parable. There was the undulating corn-field descending to the water's edge! There was the trodden pathway running through the

midst of it, with no fence or edge to prevent the seed from falling here and there on either side of it, or upon it; itself hard with the constant tramp of horse and mule and human feet. There was the good rich soil which distinguishes the whole of that plain, and its neighbourhood, from the bare hills elsewhere descending into the lake, and which, where there is no interruption, produces one vast mass of corn. There was the rocky ground of the hill-side protruding here and there through the corn-fields, as elsewhere through the grassy slopes. There were the large bushes of thorn—the '*Nabk*'—that kind of which tradition says the Crown of Thorns was woven—springing up, like the fruit-trees of the more inland parts, in the very midst of the waving wheat." *

As we have good reason to infer that, in the closing parable of the series, the figure of a *draw-net* was suggested by the sight of some Gennesaret fishermen discharging their cargo at the moment on the shore, so the Parable we are now to consider was probably suggested by what the eye of our blessed Redeemer beheld as He then gazed from the fishing-boat along the fertile plain.

We can realise the spectacle,—(at that season and spot so natural),—a Sower in early spring scattering his handfuls of grain in the upturned furrow. Birds from sea and mountain are screaming around his head, tracking his steps and picking up the stray grains which the harrow had missed, or

* Stanley's Sinai and Palestine, pp. 421, 422.

"Looking from Tiberias towards the western shore, we find the mountains, with their terrace-like sides, approaching close to the sea, but at the distance of about a league they again retreat in the form of a wide arch, leaving open a plain a league in length and half a league in breadth. It is the land of Gennesareth, and it makes good in an eminent degree all that has been recorded of the fruitfulness of the shore."—*Straus's Sinai and Golgotha.*

which had been tossed on the hardened foot-road. It was a fertile text for His opening similitude—"BEHOLD A SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW!"

Before proceeding to the parable itself, let us advert for a moment to the *Sower* and the *Seed*.

We cannot for an instant hesitate in determining that the Sower was, in the first instance, *Christ Himself*, and the Seed those great *gospel truths* which He came from heaven to implant in the hearts of man. Moreover, from the diverse soils, spoken of in the Parable, on which the seed was cast, it is evident that one of the fundamental lessons intended to be therein set forth is—that God soweth *everywhere*—that He willeth that "*all* should come to the knowledge of the truth." As in that wondrous and beauteous Panorama of natural scenery stretching before the Saviour's eye in the land of *Gennesaret*, there was every variety of soil, from the mountain-sward and the thin rocky layer to the loam of the valley,—so, in the world of human hearts and homes, was there every variety of condition and rank, disposition and character. But the Sower was to "sow beside all waters"—He, the glorious Sun, was to shine alike on palace and cottage—on rich and poor—on learned and despised. The gospel was to be preached to *every creature!* No waste so barren as to forbid the Spiritual Husbandman's labour—no rocky heart so hard as to be passed despairingly and unheeded by. If the scattered seed, thus so prodigally cast, bore no produce, the fault was not God's—the shortcoming rested not with the Sower but with the ungracious soil of the human heart. He would have none to perish unwarned; His gospel is preached "as a witness to all nations;" mighty to *save*, in the case of those

who meekly and lovingly receive it, but through the perversity of those who reject it, mighty also to *condemn.*

While Jesus, however, is the *Great Sower,* He has confided the scattering of the seed—the preaching of His holy word—to human instrumentality. "It has pleased God by the *foolishness of preaching* to save them that believe."

This parable forms a picture of every congregation of Christ's people, gathered on His own Day, throughout the world. The living and breathing souls gathered within the walls of the sanctuary, constitute the four diverse soils in the human Landscape—the *Hardened footpath;* the *Rocky covering;* the *Thorny ground;* the *Honest soil.* The Servant of God—the spiritual Husbandman—in *His* name scatters the seed, all in ignorance where it falls, how it is received, what is rooted, what is lost, what is rejected, what is germinating! *He* cannot tell what is the result. But *another there is who* CAN—who *does!* Yes! it is a solemn view to take of this great reality—that as we are assembled in the house of prayer, Christ Himself is gazing upon us! He, the Great Sower and Master Husbandman (no longer in His garb of humiliation on the shores of an earthly lake, but from His throne in glory), is gazing down on the multitudes of immortal beings gathered Sabbath after Sabbath in His house of prayer. *We* may think little of the solemnity of such meetings; we may view with indifference the scattering of this Sabbath seed. *He* does NOT! As the Sabbath-bell tolls, He hushes the songs of ministering seraphim; echoing his old Gennesaret text in their hearing,—as if souls lost or souls saved were the result of every sanctuary convocation:—"BEHOLD A SOWER GOES FORTH TO SOW!"

Let us attend, then, in their order, to the FOUR different classes of hearers specified by our Blessed Lord in this parable. We shall speak of the first two in the present chapter, and reserve the consideration of the two latter for a subsequent one. Observe, in all the four, it is the same *Sower*, the same *Seed*, the same *Season* The effects alone are different, arising from the diverse soil and condition of the human heart.

I. There are THE WAYSIDE HEARERS. *"As he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it."* *

Some corn seeds are here represented as falling on the hard beaten path in the centre of the field used by foot-passengers, or where the waggons of traffic or the carts of the husbandmen were in the habit of going. It was crushed under the feet of the one, or bruised under the wheels of the other.

Significant picture this, of the hearts of many hearers! The seed of the Word is scattered by the preacher's hand, but it falls on hearts hard as the beaten pavement. Around, furrows may be opening and inviting its entrance, but no crevice is there, in these adamant souls! The proclamation of the law in its terrors, or the gospel with its blessings, is like the winter winds or the summer sun, beating on the graves of the churchyard: the dead hear not the one and feel not the other. This *first* class of Hearers come, indeed, to the House of God. They *hear* the Word; they are church-goers if they are nothing else. They *must* have a

* Luke viii. 5.

religion of some kind. To be churchless, would compromise them in society; it would brand them in the world of fashionable profession. They must come, because others come. The trumpet-peal of custom is their Sabbath-bell. They could not enjoy their sins and follies but for this miserable blinder to the world, this wretched opiate to their consciences. But, as to all that is spoken or heard (if heard at all), they are utterly callous. They do not perceive the yawning gulph of their souls' deep necessities. They have no depressing consciousness of their lost condition, or of the magnitude of things not seen. As they sit in their pews, their thoughts are all in the world; they fold their arms and lapse into one of its dreamy reveries. Imagination becomes the hard-beaten footway of the text. Up comes the waggon of *Pleasure*, filled with the withered, faded garlands of last week's follies and gaieties, its lusts and sins, and the anticipations of fresh ones! This waggon past, another presents itself: it is that of *Business*, lumbering along with its noisy, deafening wheels. The past week's gains and losses, its happy hits, its vexatious blunders, its clever tricks and successful advantage-takings; perhaps, conjoined with these, the daring ventures and wild schemings of a desperate future—*on* it comes, these dizzy wheels of traffic crushing underneath them all thoughts of the soul, of holiness, of death, of judgment, of eternity! This waggon past, in some adjoining pew a fevered brain sees yet another toiling up the hardened road, heavier laden still than the others! It is *Mammon* with his smoking team, pushing on with his bags of gold, fearful of every rut in the way lest it may jolt his treasure, and leave some glittering coin rolling in the dust. And yet

though a waggon-load heaped high, all his thoughts are on filling it higher still, though this only increases the chances of jolting and loss! Yet *on* it comes; the precious seed is scattered, but the iron wheels grind it to powder, pulverising into dust that which is of value infinitely greater than thousands of such gold and silver!

These wheels, observe, every time they pass, are making harder still the way, lessening the chance of the seed germinating, giving to the heart more of the consistency of the rock and granite than before. Oh! how many hearts thus become, in the very sanctuary, a beaten thoroughfare for worldly schemes, and pleasures, and pursuits, and interests, and devices. They have no serious views about God or religion. They do not feel that they stand in any relation to the seed sown. If the truth were spoken plainly out, it is an infliction all this preaching, and praying, and church-going. If it were not for the look of the thing, they would be done with it. Their Religion at best is a mere piece of form, a grand figment. If you speak to them of holiness, they will say, "It is all a pretence." If you speak to them of conversion, they will call it an enthusiast's or fanatic's dream. If you speak to them of death and hell, they will turn uneasy on their seats, and say, "We don't want to hear of such things just now." In one word, they have no personal interest or concernment in all that is spoken—"As a deaf adder, they hear not;" and amid a thousand other things that may be flitting to and fro in the chambers of their memory, God is really and truly "not in all their thoughts."

At times, indeed, in spite of themselves, the barbed arrow *will* strike them; conscience will speak and their spirits

tremble, and who knows but *that* despised seed, lying forgotten on the surface of their adamant heart, might in due time grapple with the ungenial soil and spring up. But, another Foe is at hand. If the foot of traffic or the wheels of worldliness fail to mutilate and crush, there is a Great "Counter-worker" of the Sower, who in the parable is represented as casting his dark shadow over the moral landscape. "Then cometh the Wicked One, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart."* *Satan* the arch-robber—*Apollyon* "the Destroyer," is keeping his watchful eye on the scattered seed. If the waggon passes it unscathed, he has other means at hand for preventing its growth.

As our Lord, in looking towards the sower in Gennesaret, probably saw a flock of motley birds circling around him, and darting down to secure every stray grain which lay exposed on the road, so Satan, the "Prince of the power of the air," lets loose on the soul birds of prey, that pick up every spiritual seed. Some grains may have fallen into the ruts of memory, others into the sacred crevices of conscience; but a horde of winged thoughts, evil desires, corrupt passions, idle trifles, come sweeping down suddenly, and leave the heart bared and forsaken!

The corn grains of impression may be lying on the heart of the hearer when the parting blessing is pronounced, and he rises from his seat to retire from the House of God. But crossing the threshold, the old familiar world is there again, with its blue, or hazy, or wintry sky, as the case may be. There has been enough of serious talk in church. In five minutes or less, he is back again to the old starting-point

* Matt. xiii. 19.

—the absorbing topics of the day. These seem now invested with all-engrossing reality. If some stray grain be still left, it is not allowed long to linger; any startling thought, any rousing or solemnising impression is effaced like the rippled sand-marks by the first rising tide.

Ah, how great are the *devices*—the "*depths* of Satan!" He has been studying that heart of man, with its beaten footways, for 6000 years! Every year he is profiting by past experience. How terrible to think that he makes the very House of God his whispering-gallery; that into its sacred precincts—the very Holy of holies—or into the secret chamber of devotion—sweep his accursed legions to rob the soul of the Salvation so dearly purchased and so freely offered!

Be not ignorant of his devices! He employs thoughts; wandering, flighty, winged fancies, as his Birds of prey,—in themselves apparently harmless, but potent enough to pillage the heart of its best treasures. It matters not to him what the instrumentality is, if he only succeed in abstracting the mind from grander realities;—if the thought of Eternity be only kept in abeyance.

Beware of a wandering heart in the Sanctuary, leaving the seed to fall neglected and uncared for! If Israel of old left the manna ungathered when it fell, it melted away; it was shrivelled in the sun's rays; the day's supply was forfeited, and nothing could compensate for the loss. Seek to remember, Sabbath after Sabbath, as you take your places in the courts of the Lord, that you cannot retire as you entered; that the seed then sown must have a bearing on your eternity; that the gospel then preached must be either the "savour of life

unto life," or "of death unto death!" "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your ownselves; for if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass, for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." "*This, then, is he who received seed by the wayside.*"

II. We turn now to the *second* class spoken of in the parable: The STONY-GROUND HEARERS. "*And some fell,*" says St Luke, "*upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.*" The parallel passage in St Matthew is, "*Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth, and when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.*"

By what is here called "*stony places,*" we are not to understand fragments of loose rock or stone, into the crevices or interstices of which the seed fell; for if so, it might have found its way to the soil below, and in spite of the impediments and darkness that obstructed and dwarfed its growth, it *might* have struggled upwards to the air and sunlight, and gathered strength by the very difficulties it had to encounter. By "*stony places,*" our Lord intends rather one of those manifold rocks abutting into the plain of *Gennesaret* and fringing its rich corn-fields, on which there was a thin layer or deposit of mould, sufficient to conceal the naked stone, but not sufficient to afford nutriment to bring the seed to perfection. The present, however, is unlike the previous

description of the Wayside-seed. *There*, the grain was either trampled under foot, or carried away by marauding birds. Now, it springs up—and moreover, it does so "*forthwith*," "*quickly*," "*with joy*." There is a marvellously rapid growth. While in the rich soil around, the germinating seed has not burst its clod, and no flush of green is visible, the grain on the rocky knoll is shooting upwards with precocious vigour, and giving promise of speedy perfection.

But, the discerning eye of the Husbandman knows better! It is an unhealthy vitality; it cannot strike its fibres downwards into the adamant stone: "*It has no depth of earth*," —no root, no moisture. The underlying rock, by the heat which it retains, may warm the superincumbent mould, and thus act as a rapid stimulant to the seed. But, soonest green, it is soonest decayed; it is stalk-growth, nothing more. The blazing sun sends down its fiery rays, the mushroom plant droops, and withers, and dies!

This is a truthful picture of a new, and, at first sight, a more promising set of Hearers. "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word and anon with joy receiveth it: yet hath he no root in himself, but dureth for a while, for when tribulation or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, by and by he is offended." * "They on the rock," says St Luke, "are they who when they hear receive the word with joy, and these have no root; who for a while believe and in time of temptation fall away." They represent that class of hearers in our churches who are susceptible of strong and lively emotions. Not like the preceding class, who are careless and apathetic, they *enjoy* a preached

* Matt. xiii. 20, 21.

Gospel. They are easily stirred under its urgent messages. As the ambassador of Christ scatters his seed, and discourses of man's responsibility—the certainty of judgment—the awfulness of the second death!—their spirits thrill under the startling averments; resolutions of new obedience are formed—the church is left with a tear in their eye and the iron in their soul. But then, it is all *surface work*—superficial, shallow impression. It has sprung up under the stimulating heat of excitement, and expends itself in emotional feeling. The underlying proud rocky heart, *apparently* more influenced and impressed, is really *harder* than the beaten foot-road representing the former class. The roots have taken no vital grasp—they are spreading and straggling along the upper layer of profession—they have no hold on the inner deeps of the man's being—the heart remains unconverted as before. They are the class spoken of by the prophet Ezekiel—"And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." * In one word, theirs is a religion of smiles and sunbeam—a summer-walk, all prosperous so long as no dreary cloud sweeps across their landscape. But when Trial comes—when they are brought to know the great truth, "*no cross no crown*"—that the Religious life is no sailing down the current, but a breasting of the waters—a denial of self—a struggle with

* Ezekiel xxxiii. 31 32.

corruption—a parting with loved sins; when brought face to face with some strong temptation, the grappling with some vile temper, the resistance of some viler lust—ah! whenever this Sun of trial and tribulation rises, the precocious promise turns out to be a mockery. Their soul shrivels into the old lifeless thing it ever was. Their Religion is based on no solid principle: it is like the fretful treacherous ocean—the ruffle is only on the surface, underneath is the deep calm of death!

Of this class we have many Scripture examples.

Take one. *Demas* had been a faithful disciple of St Paul; he had loved his noble master; he had enjoyed his faithful preaching; he had accompanied him in his journeyings, and taken a share in the proclamation of his gospel. But in later times, Persecution arrests the apostle in his labours. Old and infirm, he is cast into the Mammertine prison in the Roman capital. If ever he needed the hand and voice of earthly friendship, it was *now*—to smoothe his pillow of straw and speak peace to his downcast spirit! But Demas (faithful in prosperity) turns recreant and coward in adversity. The sun of trial and fierce tribulation arises "for the word's sake."—The leaves of a lifetime fail. Scorched and withered and blighted, his lonely master has to utter through sorrowing tears, "*Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world!*"

Beware of this *superficial* Religion—this Religion of frames and feelings and strong impulses.

Nothing that is superficial lasts. The superficial *house* will soon totter to its foundations: the superficial *book* will fret its little hour before its author and itself are consigned to

oblivion: the superficial *student* may acquire a surface-talk on everything, and be full of youthful promise; but when launched into the world, he will soon find that nothing will stand but the deep, the solid, the real. So it is with the *religious Life.* No evanescent emotions dare come in place of real heart-change. Do not suffer mere impressions to evaporate before they issue in saving conversion. The impressions made by a rousing sermon are no more *Religion,* than the hearing of a *salvo* of artillery on a review-day might be called *fighting.*

That is real religion which can be carried with you into your families—your business—the coarse contacts and toiling drudgeries of life;—that can stand unscathed in the whirlwind of temptation, trial only leading you nearer God;—like the flower long imprisoned in the dark dungeon, but whose roots are watered by some hidden kindly spring, and which, when the iron doors are opened, turns its leaves joyously and lovingly to the sunlight.

This our age has in it, we fear, much affinity with the *second* class spoken of in the Parable. *Surface-work* in all things, is its distinguishing characteristic. Frivolous gaieties are too often the layer on which its very religion grows. Souls—selfish souls covered over with the wreck and *debris* of worldliness—come and sit in our churches to get their share of the Sabbath-seed. Saturday evening has closed over scenes of giddy pleasures. Weary and jaded, they come to a new scene of mental excitement, to indulge in a new class of feverish emotions in the house of God. The reaction is not displeasing. Heart-sick, it may be, with the week's frivolities—wearied in body and mind—they sit with complacency

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY

to hear of their sins; they heave some sighs over their follies; they feel that they have been mocked in their pursuit of pleasure, and as they listen to the sublime lessons—the hopes—the promises—the joys of the Gospel—a tear starts to their eye and a pang visits their souls. The Seed of promise seems for the moment to have taken root and sprung. But soon Monday treads on the heels of Sabbath-hours and Sabbath-resolutions. From the ball-room to the church, from the church to the ball-room. The world's sun is up again in the horizon. The giddy soul rushes afresh, headlong into temptation. Amid the smiles and frowns of that withering world the sickly leaves pine and die!

Seek to avoid anything and everything that tends to foster this life of cold indurating selfishness—the life of *Pleasure* which is a life of *death*. This life of mere Sabbath emotion and weekly godlessness is one of awful peril. It deceives the soul. It makes you believe there is a merit in coming to church, and in sowing the seed on the rock of weekly selfishness, though it withers before evening has gathered around you its shadows.

Better, you may say, a withered stalk than none at all. Better these few Sabbath sighs and tears and pious excitement than treading the seed under foot, and denying it all entrance into the memory or heart. Oh! is it come to this, that a few wretched sighs and tears and emotions on Sunday, are to purchase absolution for a week's frivolity and sin;—as if, by wearing this garment of Sabbath sackcloth, you could, with greater impunity, during the week, wear "the garment spotted by the flesh?" You are thereby only throwing a sop to an accusing conscience. You are wasting the Good Seed,

which might have been cast with advantage on other and kindlier soil. You are resting satisfied with the husk and shell of Religion, despising its kernel. You are blinding your own eyes to the fact which the great Harvest-time of the world will force on you, that you are contenting yourself with "a name to live while you are spiritually dead."

It is a terrible thing thus to be sowing to the wind and reaping the whirlwind—to be forfeiting and abusing opportunities, and causing the very Ordinances of God to aggravate alike your guilt and condemnation. Even your very Afflictions will be unsanctified. If the Seed had sunk into a good soil, when the sun of Trial pours down its rays, its heat would nourish and foster it. But that seed, falling on "a rock-bed of selfishness"—on the thin layer besprinkling a godless heart—lo! when affliction arises, the heat only scorches and burns, embittering the pangs of the evil day. Like fabled Icarus soaring aloft on his waxen wings—borne upwards for a time on the breezes of prosperity—when you come to face the fiery Sun—the wings melt, and you fall powerless to the earth.

Reader! while the hypocrite's hope shall perish, seek to be so rooted in the faith,—grounded in the love of Christ, that when the great trial-hour shall come;—when the branch shall be stripped of its verdure—"the beautiful rod" broken—and, as in the vision of the Apocalypse, "all the green grass burnt up"—it may be yours exulting, in the precious seed that has fallen deep into your hearts, to say, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

IX.

The Sower and the Seed.

Sow in the morn thy seed,
At eve hold not thy hand,
To doubt and fear give thou no heed,
Broad cast it o'er the land.

Thou canst not toil in vain—
Cold, heat, and moist, and dry,
Shall foster and mature the grain
For garners in the sky.

And duly shall appear
In beauty, verdure, strength,
The tender blade, the stalk, the ear,
And the full corn at length.

"Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower."—MATT. xiii.; MARK iv. 3; LUKE viii. 4.

THE SOWER AND THE SEED.

In the preceding chapter, our attention was directed to two classes in the Parable of the Sower—*The Wayside and Stony-ground hearers.* We shall proceed to consider the two remaining soils our Lord here describes—the *Thorny* and the *Good ground.*

The third class He speaks of are the THORNY-GROUND HEARERS. "*And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.*"* "*He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.*"†

The Seed, you observe here, takes root—it penetrates more deeply than in either of the preceding cases. The soil was no longer the superficial layer on the top of the rock; if justice had been done to it, the result must have been an ample produce. But the good seed was "strangled"‡ by rival occupants. Thorns were there—not thorns already grown and covering the surface, but old unextirpated roots, which, at the insertion of the seed, may have shewn no vestige above ground, but which, ere long, began to push upwards in their former strength. Being the stronger of the two, indigenous to the soil,—old possessors,—they soon proved more than a match for the tiny stalks of grain,

* Luke viii. 7. † Matt. xiii. 7, 22. ‡ So rendered in Wycliffe's translation.

strangling them with their prickly branches; (literally) "they went in between the wheat, and choked it."

The evil was twofold: the Thorns drew that nutriment from the soil which otherwise the germinating seed would have appropriated. There was room for *one*, but not for *both*. The sap that would have sent its vivifying juices up the stalk of corn, expended itself mainly on the stronger rival. The corn plant grew up, therefore, a dwarfed and sickly thing from the exhausted and impoverished soil.

But there was another evil entailed by these thorny occupants of the ground;—*they hid out the sunlight*. Their thick bristling boughs (thicker than the thorns in our country) interrupted and intercepted the two great supports of vegetable life—Air and Sunshine. Thus, though some of the corn stalks shot up, struggling into existence in spite of these impediments, what mattered it? The ear was hollow—the fruit worthless. The reaper's sickle passed them by untouched. They were but mockeries of his toil; they would only encumber his barn; or, if mixed with other grain, injure and detract from its quality.

Here is the *third* picture of the *Hearers of the word*. The Seed of immortal truth finds deep lodgment in their memories and hearts. The great requirements of the soul—the great questions of eternity are, for awhile at least, no superficial matters. They feel the momentous interests at stake. They sit in breathless and arrested solemnity under the proclamation of the gospel. They *like* faithful preaching. They are not as the former class, who would take offence at bold statements; who warn their ministers to lower their standard lest they leave their church; who

try to inveigle their spiritual teachers into that greatest snare—preaching *smooth things.* They *relish* the full and gracious unfolding of the plan of Redemption. Christ crucified they are willing to take as the alone "power of God unto salvation." But soon a great and crying evil develops itself at the very root of their spiritual being. Unextirpated habits and tastes and propensities, for awhile muffled and concealed, begin to manifest their presence and power in the soil of the heart. Religion springs up—but, lo! it is a dwarfed and mangled thing; for side by side with it there are old and vicious principles and practices. These, like the Thorns, are of spontaneous growth,—natural to the heart; while the Word, like the corn-seed, is an *exotic.* The new-born principle has no chance with the old veteran owners of the soil; spiritual things have to wage an unequal conflict with those of the earth, earthy; and what is the result?—the life of godliness is eaten out and consumed—the soul "brings forth no fruit to perfection"—Satan's devices *within* the heart are more mischievous and more fatal than his troop of birds from *without*—and "the last state of this man is worse than the first."

Our Blessed Lord leaves us in no doubt as to what is meant by these *thorns.* He tells us they are "*the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches.*" These monster impediments have been rightly regarded as the two great, though diverse causes, of spiritual declension and decay;—and both in equal antagonism to the soul's progress.

"*The Cares of the world*"—the poor man's birthright of penury—the weekly and daily struggle with oppression and want—living, as he often does, from hand to mouth—an un-

provided morrow forecasting its dark shadows upon him, and blinding his soul to its nobler destinies;—with so many things to be careful and troubled about in this world, that the one thing needful is kept in abeyance and thrust into a corner. His family—his house-rent—his trade—his merchandise—his daily toil—these are the bristling *thorns* that are overmastering better thoughts, and better times, and better resolutions. When he started on his journey—fresh from a mother's prayers—the precious seed seemed to have taken thorough root; but life, with its feverish anxieties and cankering cares, has eaten out the memory of a parent's sacred words and admonitions. The foot-road to the place of prayer is choked with entangling weeds. It was once a well-beaten path, but the thorn and the nettle, in wild luxuriance, tell the too truthful story of a knee unbent—prayer neglected—God forgotten!

The other and opposite cause of strangling the seed is the "*Deceitfulness of riches.*"

The Poor man's spiritual life is choked with needless cares—penury staring him in the face with its real or imagined evils. The Rich man is endangered and imperilled by the *Deceitfulness of riches.*

But mistake us not—there is no necessary deceitfulness in Riches themselves. It would be a hard thing if God poured affluence into a man's lap, and all the while was pouring a curse! It is not the mere fact of a man being a *millionaire*—having bags of gold in his possession—that brings him under the category of a Thorny-ground Hearer. When Christ says, "How *hardly* shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven," He means they who *trust*

in riches—who make riches their idol—and clutch their gold as if it were the gate of heaven. The poor, mean, miserable beggar, who has his hoarded pence sewed up in the rags he wears, or the rags he sleeps on, is destroying his soul as much with these "choking thorns" as the lordly Miser with his coveted thousands. The Waggon we have already spoken of, as crushing under its grinding wheels the seed scattered on the wayside, is as much a mammon-load whether a poor man sits hugging his bags of copper, or a Croesus sits trembling amid his chests of gold.

"The Greek word πλουτος (it has been noted by a learned commentator) is not riches absolutely as *possessed*, but riches *desired*."* Avarice is a quality of mind—a base principle of earth-born souls common to rich and poor—to the Dives and the Lazarus—in the extremes of society;—to the man eating his crust of bread, and the man wearing his purple and fine linen. But however this love of gold may develop itself, —(whether in hasting to be rich, or in the cursed ambition that, like a raging fever, has seized all men to affect style and greatness beyond their rank—amassing only for personal aggrandisement and selfish extravagance)—when a man whose soul has been once fired with better things—who was once feelingly alive to his spiritual necessities, and once drank greedily in the truths of the gospel—when that man surrenders himself to the tyranny of these lusts, allowing them to twist their roots round the very nerves and sinews of his being, either for the wretched pleasure of living penuriously, or living and dying a prodigal spendthrift—what more appropriate description could be given of the ruinous

* Alford's Greek Testament.

deceitfulness of these riches than *this*, that the good seed "*fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked it?*"

What a living protest have we in these "Thorny ground hearers"—this *third* class in the parable, against the great crying sin of our day—the rock on which vessels freighted with immortality are weekly wrecked and foundering! Men of promise and high aspirations — men even of religious training and religious profession—become seized with the accursed thirst for gold—bartering health, morals, principle, social ties, life itself, in this demon-scramble. The cold-blooded murders, and villain plunderings of the street and the highway, perpetrated by the dregs of society, are not one whit more heinous in the sight of God, than are the polished counterparts of social and individual baseness, where the betrayal of high trust, or the delirium of wild speculation, has embittered the widow's tears, defrauded the orphan of his bread, and left happy firesides stripped and desolate. Well did He who knew the human heart denounce "*covetousness*" as "*idolatry.*" Depend upon it, God will visit our land and our time with judgment, if this usurping Dagon be not hurled from its throne. It is this mammon-spirit which, in the case of all ancient nations, formed the first symptom of decadence and decrepitude—the first impelling wave which rose to a wild deluge of ruin. God keep us from the verge of this engulphing whirlpool, and tune our lips more to the music and spirit of the prayer of honest, contented, unostentatious frugality — "Give me neither poverty nor riches—feed me with food convenient for me!"

And as the *Deceitfulness of riches* is common alike to

poor and rich, so would I add, that *"the Cares of this life"* must by no means be considered as spiritual hindrances peculiar to the *poor*.

Alas! in every rank, in every station, these distracting, disquieting solicitudes are a sore enemy of the soul's welfare. It is no light thing thus to suffer the heart to be unduly engrossed with these earthly cares. Christ Himself includes them in a catalogue of *great* sins. Were you never struck with these words? "Take heed," says He, "to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness." And what follows? is it the mention of some other low and grovelling lust? Hear what He says, "Surfeiting, drunkenness, AND CARES OF THIS LIFE, and so that day overtake you as a thief."

"*Cares*" every one *must* have. It would be an idle mockery to say, "Bury your cares! Cares and religion are incompatible. Let your family shift for themselves. Take no thought of the morrow." This would be presumption; not faith. It would be fatalism, not trust. It would be the argument for the selfish isolation of the hermit's cell—the sinful ignoring of life's duties—the denial of the common debt due to the vast brotherhood of man. But be on your guard against *excess* of care, or *unlawful* care. It is the attribute of the worldly—the unregenerate—that they "*mind earthly things.*" They are *grovellers*. Their souls "cleave to the dust," instead of soaring heavenwards. They are content with the prodigal's portion in the far country, when they might have been guests at their Father's ample board and joyous home.

You will carefully observe that the great evil of the Thorny

ground Hearers was, that they were content to let the seed fall in an *unprepared* heart. By a blunder in spiritual husbandry, they had neglected to root out latent principles of evil, which afterwards rose with giant growth, and crushed and mangled every stalk of spiritual promise. The contending thorns and seed illustrate, by parabolic figure, a former saying of Christ, "No man can serve two masters;" "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." I repeat what I have already said—no soil has sufficient sap to mature both thorns and grain—the presence and growth of the one must inevitably alienate the vital juices and nutriment that would otherwise have contributed to the strength and growth of the other. It can bear *wheat*, or it can bear *thorns*, but it has not the productive power to bear the two. So it is in the spiritual field. You cannot have your crop of sin and your fruits of righteousness. You cannot live both for *time* and *eternity*. By seeking to retain both worlds, you lose both.

See that every root of bitterness likely hereafter to spring up and trouble you be eradicated;—all idle frivolities—all guilty pleasures—all occupations of doubtful propriety likely to dislodge God from the heart. By indulging in these, you are wilfully denuding yourselves of gospel blessings. You are shackling yourselves so as to be unable to stoop to the joyous fountain gushing at your feet, and to partake of its living stream. When you go to prayer, the key has gathered over it the rust of worldliness. It can no longer fit the lock. You kneel in your closets; but, lo! the wheels of devotion, like those of Pharaoh's chariots, are taken off, or drag heavily. And then, what is the inevitable result? "A divided will

a half service, ever ends in the prevalence of evil over good." The half-hearted believer—the border Christian—the loiterer between the kingdoms of light and darkness—spoken of in this third class, cannot linger long where he is; darkness gets the better of light—conscience gets more and more drugged and stupified—the upspringing seed goes from weakness to weakness—the latent thorny corruptions from strength to strength!

Now, in all these *third-class* cases in the parable we have hitherto considered, there is a *seeming* and apparent progress to something *better*—a nearer approach to the character of a true believer. But it is in semblance, not in reality. The guilt of the three may rather and more truthfully be taken in an inverse ratio from the order stated here;*—the deep-rooted corruption of the heart manifesting itself with greater intensity at each advancing step. The *beaten road*—then the *rocky ground*—then, in spite of great promise and great privilege, the *choking thorns*. "The climax is APPARENTLY from *bad* to *better*. The first *understand not*. The second *understand* and *feel*. The third *understand, feel,* and *practise*. But in REAL DEGREE it is from BAD to WORSE. Less awful is the state of those who *understand not* the word, and lose it immediately, than that of those who *feel* it, *receive it with joy,* and in time of trial *fall away*. Less awful, again, this last, than that of those who *understand, feel,* and *practise,* but are *fruitless* and *impure.*"†

We pass on now to the *Fourth* and last class of *Hearers*. "*But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit.*

* Drummond on the Parables, p. 367 † Alford, *in loco.*

some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold." We may take the explanation of this as given by St Luke:—"*That on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*"*

We are arrested here by the question, What is the *good* heart? Is there aught in the natural soil of the human spirit entitled to be called honest or *good*? Is there any natural aptitude in the soul of man for receiving the seed of the kingdom?

We answer, unhesitatingly, *None*, independent of the grace of God, and the vivifying, transforming, regenerating power of His Spirit. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." The preparation of the heart is from the Lord. "The soil is made receptive by a granted receptive power." It is *His* rain which softens the hardened path. It is *His* hammer which splinters the rock in pieces. It is *His* ploughshare which uproots the strangling thorns, and converts the wilderness into a well-watered garden.

Moreover, the term "*good*" we are to take in a comparative and qualified sense. Alas! even after the Spirit of God has been at work, and the heart has been renewed, how much of the old man still remains! How much of nature still

* Luke viii. 15.

"This soil presents a threefold antithesis to the bad, as expressed by the different Evangelists. It is, 1st, *soft*, *i. e.*, loose on the surface; 2d, it is *deep*—no impeding rock beneath; and 3d, it is *pure*—free from the tare seed and thorn roots. The pure and good heart, then, is susceptible for receiving—solid for keeping—sincere and decided—self-denying—earnestly persevering in letting the Divine seed work within it, by that power which ever tends towards fruit."—Stier, *in loco*.

mingles with better purposes! "What wilt thou see in the Shulamite? The company of two armies."* The two opposing antagonist forces of grace and corruption—the thorn still struggling to its old mastery, and the power of God alone keeping it down.

There are two special characteristics here given of this good heart:—

I. It is *honest.* The man is in earnest, when he seats himself in his pew and listens to the words of eternal life. It is no mere pleasant song he hears to beguile the passing hour. It is the great question of questions—the theme which overshadows his whole eternity, and makes all things here—his business, his trade, his wealth, his family—look little indeed, poor trifles, in comparison with these peerless realities!

Let us seek to be *in earnest.*† *Earnestness* is the great secret of success in worldly things. A man with no great natural gifts—not above mediocrity in intellect—if his soul be *set* upon some object or attainment, evincing *earnestness,* a fixedness of purpose, unity of action, and concentration of thought—will secure the golden prize. From the boy mastering his task, to the hero taking a city, or the astronomer finding his planet, a dogged earnestness of purpose will eventually lead to triumphant results. So with spiritual things.—"This ONE thing I do," is the great motto and maxim of the conquering Christian. Honestly yield yourselves up to this heavenly seed. "Keep it," as it is here

* Sol. Song, vi. 13.

† See this point, and indeed the whole parable, ably illustrated, in "Robertson's Sermons," first series, p. 32.

said: suffer not the soiling contacts of the world to stifle its growth, but seek to "go on unto perfection."

A *second* characteristic of the "good heart" here mentioned is, that it "brings forth fruit with *patience.*"

It is not sentimental emotion—lively frames, excitable feelings—but it is living action, abiding permanent principle. It is one thing to *feel*—another to *act.* A touching story in a newspaper-column—an historical incident one thousand years old—a spectacle of misery or want, seen in walking along the streets—any or all of these may make me *feel;* but it is another thing to relieve want, to prove the good Samaritan, to bind up the wounds of the sufferer, and fill the mouths of the perishing. Unless *feeling* be thus expanded and developed into *action,* it is a useless thing. A man can weep over a romance, who never gave a farthing to an orphan, or who would see his fellow drowning and refuse to help him. So in spiritual things, a man may *feel* the truths of God's Word;—the story of Redeeming love may fill his eye;—he may listen with a glowing heart to denunciations of selfishness, to pictures of the beauties of holiness, and the happiness of doing good—and yet it may all evaporate in mere sentiment, and he may go out of church the icicle he entered it, thawed for the moment into tears, but these congealed and frozen again, when he passes from the region of idealism into the realities of life.

Let it not be so with you. Let others "*think*" religion, or *theorise* on religion, or *talk* about religion, be it yours to *live* religion. It is not creeds, or party, or churchmanship that will save you. All the dogmatic theology of Christendom and its schools, will not save you. A dry, orthodox

creed, or confession of faith, could as little insure the salvation of a soul, as a rule in Algebra, or a problem in Mathematics. Bring forth fruit! Be holy—love God! Open the drooping leaves of your renewed natures to the gladsome sunlight. In one word — "Do those things which are pleasing in His sight."

This is the want—the crying demand of our age—a living Christianity—Epistles of Christ that may be "known and read of all men." Presumptuous scoffers are there, who would dare to allege that the Bible is an antiquated book—that its age is past and gone—that it was well enough for the world or the Church in its nonage—but the refinements of the present era demand something higher and better. Vain dreamers! Christians, if you who value your Bibles and prize their priceless worth, know that something better, something nobler, *cannot* be given; remember too, there *is one* volume (not a substitute, but an all important supplement), which you *can* produce to silence the gainsayer—the volume of your *Life;*—a volume read by worldly and scoffing eyes, that scorn to read the Word of God. They can contemn God's blessed Revelation as an *effete* and antiquated story, but they cannot resist the mighty eloquence of a pure, holy, Christ-like, heavenly walk!

Scorning the base compliances of the world; at war with its selfishness; diffusing a kindly glow of love, and charity, and peace, and amiability all around:—Yes, *here* is Christianity! No pulpit figment—no barren theory—no worn-out dream of an age long gone by; but an active, living, influential principle; a life hid with Christ in God; the glorious, imperishable, indestructible seed, taking root in heaven-born

natures, and bringing forth fruit "in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some an hundred fold!"

From the entire Parable let us gather a lesson to Ministers and People—to the Sowers and the Soil.

The SOWERS.—How vast their responsibility! God's accredited Servants, going forth Sabbath after Sabbath, bearing the precious seed—seeking with all fidelity to keep back nothing of the Truth of God;—to lay bare all heart deceptions—to denounce every spurious soil which mocks the good seed and imperils eternity. If desirous to be true to our great mission, woe be to us if we rest satisfied with any man-made religion; any wretched compromise of hollow profession; anything short of aiming at *the* SALVATION OF SOULS. One soul really *saved*, is worth ten thousand merely MORALISED! The ambassadors of Christ, indeed, may not scorn, but glory in the title of the upholders of Virtue—the stern and uncompromising denunciators of national and individual immorality. But at the same time, would we repudiate the idea that we are but Conservators of the public peace, commissioned to watch the floodgates of crime, to repress, whether in its more polished or debasing forms, hydra-headed vice, and to enforce the claims and extol the happiness of virtue. This would be a poor petty instalment of the great debt we are commissioned by our Heavenly Master to discharge. No! Our work is the sowing of Gospel seed—the free proclamation of a free Salvation, through the Blood of Jesus; regeneration and sanctification through the Spirit of Jesus. All else will be inadequate to renew a man's nature, and raise his

soul from the ruins of the fall. We might preach to the drunkard for ever on his drunkenness, or to the thief on his purloining, or to the covetous on the baseness and peril of fostering a mammon-spirit:—We *might* possibly make them *reformed characters,* but we should not make them *saved men.* Moreover, being a mere change of *habit,* not of *principle,* we could have no security for its permanency; it would be but the lopping down of the thorns to spring again, to shoot aloft their stems in wilder luxuriance and strength than ever. It is not single fruits we ask to be manifested, or single thorns we wish extirpated; for "if any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature.*" He has new motives, new aims, new principles of action.

Seek for the promised aids of the Holy Spirit to effect a radical change in your hearts; that, by what Dr Chalmers happily called "the expulsive power of a new affection," "all old things may pass away, and all things become new." Thus will your minds, Sabbath after Sabbath, be prepared and made receptive for the good seed of the word. That word *is* "quick and powerful," and can convert into a pathway for the visits of Jesus, what was once as a hardened footroad, trodden by Satan and swept by his legion emissaries.

Yes! this is our comfort and consolation, that the word we preach is *not* the word of *Man,* but the word of *God.* It is altogether independent of man. However weak and unworthy the instrument, it is God's appointed ordinance. Often, when in conscious weakness and feebleness, we utter its wondrous verities—when at times, as every minister of the gospel must feel, we are pressed down by want of faith and want of zeal, our work dimmed and clouded by human

sin and human frailty and infirmity; or, what is equally felt, often when inculcating solemn lessons which we have most urgent need ourselves to learn, demanding tears of contrition which we need ourselves first to weep—oh, what a comfort to fall back on the assurance that "the word of God is *not bound!*" That it is not of him that *preacheth* or him that *speaketh*, or of him that *heareth*, but "of God that sheweth mercy."

Often it is a coward heart that sounds the trumpet in battle,—stirring the courage and nerving the arm of thousands. The Sun in yonder heavens, that dispenses light to its circling planets, is said itself to be a cold and frigid mass. The Sower scattering the grains from his side may be enfeebled by age and disease, want and penury,—but yet the seed thus scattered by a decrepit hand takes root in the thankful and well-cultured soil, and produces food for hundreds.

So, thanks be to God, the Church of Christ is independent of the mere Instrument. The sound of salvation—the light of truth—the seed of the gospel—is independent of US! "The excellency and the power are altogether of God." There may be no Paul to plant, no Apollos to water, but He is able from stammering lips and feeble tongues to "give the increase."

And if there be a word to the *Sower* there is also a word to the *Soil*. Would that we bore in mind that each successive sowing increases our responsibility! We are invested, so to speak, each Sabbath with a *new talent*. On account of each Sermon we hear, we have incurred new obligations—we have heard fresh warnings—listened to fresh entreaties. Oh! in the great diary of Heaven, while the *fact* of our meeting is thus inserted—"*Behold a sower went forth to*

sow"—the appended entry in the book of God, regarding every heart, will either be "This day SALVATION," or, "This day CONDEMNATION, has come to this house."

Break up your fallow ground! God does not in the text irremediably give up and surrender the three worthless soils. The very utterance of the parable seems to imply, that the most *hardened* ground might yet become soft, and the most obdurate reclaimed!

But see, oh, see to it, that you are not *self-deceived.* The startling fact in this parable, that out of *four* diverse soils ONE *only* was sound and good, ought surely to lead us to deep heart-searchings, to scrutinise our motives and character, and ascertain what, on the Great Day of reckoning, would be our standing-place before God.

Do not go to the sanctuary merely to listen and not to *practise;*—to hear what is preached, to criticise it, or laud it, or condemn it;—to give the ear and the lip during the brief Sabbath hour to *God,* and the *soul* during the week to the world. A few passing compunctions, and then to lapse again into sin—the victim of a deeper ruin than before. Ah! my brother, it may seem a small matter to thee now, this scorning of offered mercy—this cold indifference to the perils and prospects of eternity. You may afford now to smile at these pleadings as idle tales; to let the seed lie rejected on the hardened footpath—the footpath once softened, it may be, by a father's prayers and watered by a mother's tears. But wait till you come to stand on the verge of the awful precipice,—about, in an unexpected moment, to take the final leap into a neglected eternity,—and say, at what value will you estimate your neglected Sabbaths THEN?

X.

The Storm on the Lake.

Night sinks on the wave,
  Hollow gusts are sighing,
Sea birds to their cave
  Through the gloom are flying.
Oh! should storms come sweeping,
Thou in heaven unsleeping,
O'er Thy children vigil keeping,
    Hear Thou and save!

Stars look o'er the sea,
  Few and sad and shrouded;
Faith our light must be
  When all else is clouded.
Thou whose voice came thrilling,
Wind and billow stilling,
Speak once more our prayer fulfilling—
    Power dwells with Thee!

"And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And behold there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves; but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him and awoke him, saying, Lord save us: we perish!"—MATT. viii. 23–28; MARK iv. 35–41; LUKE viii. 22–25.

THE STORM ON THE LAKE.

THIS is the first of the "Memories of GENNESARET" which have their scenery and illustration not on the Shores but in the Lake itself. Lessons from the lips of the Great Teacher are now read to us amid winds and waters.

We have already, indeed, found our Blessed Redeemer discoursing from the deck of a vessel to the listening multitudes, and, in the miraculous Draught, claiming as the Lord of Nature, dominion over the *Fish of the sea.* But He is now to manifest His dominion over the Sea itself. As He has already asserted Lordship over its tenantry, He is about to claim sovereignty also over their unstable domain. Who can estimate the priceless worth of that handful of Voyagers, who, in the dusky evening twilight, push off from the Western Shore? That humble fishing-boat contains the Infant Church. It is freighted with the world's Salvation! These winds and waves are charged with sublime moral and spiritual lessons to the end of time. As we hear uttered the mandate which chained the tempests of Tiberias, and laid to sleep its waters, we can take up the words of the Psalmist and say, with a nobler than their primary meaning, *"O Lord God of Hosts who is a strong Lord like unto thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise thou stillest them!"*

Let us seek to gather from this interesting incident some of those lofty lessons it is fitted and designed to teach us.

It speaks emphatically "*concerning Christ and his Church,*" and let these two points successively engage our thoughts.

The Storm on the Lake speaks CONCERNING CHRIST.

(1.) His HUMANITY is here strikingly brought before us.

That same forenoon Jesus had spoken the Parable of the Sower;—a parable, as we have remarked, probably suggested by seeing, nigh to where He stood, a husbandman, in early spring, casting his seed into the upturned furrow. Evening had now come. That Sower had retired to his home. Already may he have been stretched on his couch of sleep, recruiting his weary frame after the toils of the day. So also had the *Heavenly Sower!* None more needing repose than *He* after a day of such unremitting labour!

But where is *His* home? where His couch? Out amid the chill damps of the evening, a boat is seen gliding along the lake, manned by a few fishermen. They speak with suppressed breath, for a weary, jaded passenger, wrapped for warmth in a coarse fisherman's coat, lies snatching what repose he can find in the hinder part of the vessel. Let no harsh voice break His rest. He has, during that livelong day, been scattering the seed of a nobler than any earthly harvest. How deep, how profound are His slumbers! The splash of the oars—the scream of the birds overhead—disturb Him not. Yet rude is His couch—hard His pillow. They took Him into the boat, (in the quaint but expressive words of St Mark,) "*Even as He was.*" "EVEN AS HE WAS;"—all unrefreshed and unprepared for a voyage. The evening meal probably untasted. The garments needed for crossing the

Lake unprovided. His head, as the word in the original seems to imply, rests uneasily on the rough wooden rail at the stern of the boat.*

It is a touching incident in the life of the great Apostle, when, "as Paul the Aged," he sent a message to Timothy to bring with him "the cloak he left at Troas" to protect his shivering frame from the cold of a Roman dungeon. But what was this in striking pathos, compared to the scene we have *here?* Paul's Master and Lord—the Being of all Beings—GOD manifest in the flesh—that Adorable human form within which Deity dwelt—laid on the rough planks of a fishing-vessel; —exhausted nature demanding refreshment and rest!

We have read of hunted and outlawed monarchs seeking refuge and repose in forest huts. Tales linger in our own land of royal adventurers sleeping soundly and gratefully in the chill mountain cave, or on the clay-floor of Highland shielings. But what are these?—poor insignificant nothings in comparison with the scene before us. The Lord of Glory —Immanuel, God with us—out on the bleak sea;—the dusk of approaching night for His curtains, the sky for His canopy —stretched like a helpless babe in the arms of sleep—lulled to rest by the music of oars and the ripple of waters!

The scene deepens in interest as the Voyage proceeds. When they left the shore, the sun had apparently set peacefully over the Western mountains—the sky was unfretted with a cloud—the sea unruffled with waves. But suddenly one of those squalls or gusts so often experienced in inland

* Even though προσκεφάλαιον may signify ordinarily a second pillow or cushion, yet the article in Mark iv. 38 seems to indicate something belonging to the ship which might serve *as* a cushion or *support.*"—*Stier's* "Words of the Lord Jesus," vol. i., page 363.

lakes came sweeping down the opposite mountain gorge. The gathering clouds answer to the wail of the hurricane. The waves beneath lift their crested forms, and the rain* rushes from the blackened heavens. So violent, indeed, does the tempest soon become, that, from the wetting spray dashing over the boat, and the torrents from above, she is fast filling with water;—"*The waves beat into the ship so that it was now full.*" It could, indeed, be no mimic storm, no ordinary danger, that would lead the fishermen-disciples, who knew the sea so well from youth, to cower in terror for their safety and abandon themselves to despair.

And what now of that august Sleeper? Still weary Humanity asserts its need of repose. The wind is sighing and sweeping around. The rain is pouring on that unprotected pillow. Yet still He slumbers! The wild howling war of the elements awakes Him not! And unless His disciples with violent hand had come and roused Him, † these weary eyes would have slept out the storm. Even that last lurch of the Vessel which had led the faithless mariners to cry, in an extremity of tremor and agitation, "*Master, Master!*"—even *this* had not disturbed that SLEEPING MAN!

Oh, wondrous, beauteous testimony to the *perfect Humanity* of Jesus. I say PERFECT *Humanity;* for many there are, who, while they speak of Him as *Man*, think of Him at the same time as something far beyond their sympathies and feelings, their weaknesses and infirmities—a sort of half-Man, half-Angel, incapable of any identity of experience

* The accompaniment of rain is involved in the original word.

† All the three Evangelists speak of the disciples awaking Him before they addressed Him.

with them: His life a mysterious drama, which they may gaze upon with wonder, but which to them is invested with no personal interest. Look at this picture on the Lake of Tiberias. One only of all that little crew was prostrated with bodily exhaustion, and that ONE was JESUS! It is the same Pilgrim Saviour who, after traversing the dusty roads of Samaria, with its hot summer sun blazing overhead, flung Himself, weak and wayworn, as best He could, on a well by the wayside, and asked from a Samaritan woman a cup of cold water. It is the same lowly Sufferer who, exhausted with weariness and watchings—stripes and buffetings—fell powerless under the cross which cruelty compelled Him to bear; or who, as He was transfixed on it, in anguish exclaimed, "*I thirst.*" It is the same Divine Sympathiser whose breaking heart gave vent to its pangs, in audible sobs, at the Graveyard of *Bethany.* The "Temple of His body" was mysterious indeed—a holy, sinless, unpolluted shrine. But though separate from sinners, it was not separated from human infirmities. Hunger, thirst, weakness, weariness, suffering, pain, had their lodgment there. The motto and superscription on its portico ever was, "*Behold* THE MAN."

Most touchingly do we read this truth in the narrative before us. Ah! when I wish to feel certified of the glorious, upholding, gladdening assurance, that Jesus was indeed "bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh;" that He knows my frame; that He remembers I am dust; that He had the blood of the human race in His Veins, and the sinless infirmities of the human race in His Nature; that He knows the very lassitude and languor of this frail body, which so often

crushes and enfeebles its companion spirit,—I go not to hear Angels chanting His advent in the lowly Manger, nor to the Magi hastening, under their guiding star, to present offerings at the feet of that Infant of Bethlehem. I go not even to the home of earthly friendship, to see Him ally Himself with human hearts. I rather go out amid the bleak and howling winds of an earthly Lake. I see there the Saviour who died for me, sunk in slumber on the deck of a vessel;—glad of rest, as the humblest son of earthly toil;—the prostration of an overwrought frame refusing to be roused by nature's loudest accents, and requiring the hands and voice of His own Disciples to unseal His weary eyelids!

Again—while a *Perfect Humanity*, observe, further, it was *a pure, spotless* Humanity, which belonged to Jesus.

That peaceful Slumberer on *Gennesaret* is the type of *Innocence*. If Jonah outslept *his* storm, it was because his conscience was lulled and deadened. He had defied his God; and his God for the moment had so left the Atheist Prophet, that the tempest's rage fell disregarded on his soul. But a Greater, a Holier than Jonas, is here! No moral storm ever swept over that pure, calm, sinless spirit. No unquiet, disturbing vision of guilt, now flits across the Sleeper's bosom. On the other side of the lake whither He was going, a demon-crowd of Devils haunted the gorges of Gadara. According to some writers (as having in their power the destructive agencies of nature by reason of the sin of man), they may have been riding now on the wings of this storm, doing their best to avert their own approaching discomfiture. Think of their bosoms tortured by the me-

mory of a guilty *past*, maddened to despair by the prospect of a hopeless *future;* the sport of tempests, of which *Gennesaret's* surface was then a feeble type. These wicked were like that "troubled sea which cannot rest." But see the Spotless Lamb of God!—in the absence of all human comforts, yet with the calm treasure of a peaceful conscience, He sleeps tranquilly, as the cradled infant which a mother's gentle lullaby has sung to rest!

But (2.) The scene we are now considering speaks concerning the Saviour's DEITY.

It is remarkable, that in all the more memorable incidents of our Lord's life, whenever His lowliness and humiliation are signally manifested, there is always (or generally), in conjunction with this, some august exhibition of His Godhead. His *Humanity* was proclaimed in the lowly stable of His birth; but in that same hour Angels over Bethlehem sung of His *glory.* His *Humiliation* was touchingly proclaimed in receiving baptism (a sinner's rite) at a sinner's hand; but the Heavens were opened, and a sublime voice from "the Excellent Glory" attested His *Divinity.* Bethany's tear-drops spoke of the tenderness of His *Human* heart. Bethany's word of omnipotence, which summoned the sheeted dead from the tomb, proclaimed the majesty of His *Godhead.* Calvary's Cross shews us a *dying man;*—the crown of thorns—the gash of the spear—the criminal's torture—the malefactor associates—all speak of the depths of *Humiliation.* But a blackened sun; riven rocks; the earth trembling to support its Creator's cross;—were nature's glorious testimonies that He who hung in ignominy on that tree was "THE MIGHTY GOD."

We have the same juxtaposition of lowliness and greatness in this scene on the *Lake of Galilee.* "As the Son of Man," says a Writer, "He slept; but as the Son of God in Man, He awakes and speaks. For Himself, exhausted; for others, Almighty." He opens His eyes on that scene of nature's wildest uproar, and sitting unperturbed in the midst of it, counsels and comforts:—First, as a great Master reproving His disciples' fears, and then as the great God uttering His "Peace, be still." As the Lord alike over the atmosphere above, and the waters beneath, He addresses each separately. Looking upward, first to the storm raging on high, "He rebukes the *wind,* saying '*Peace!*'" Then turning to the waves below, the angry trough of the sea, He adds, "Be still." A new element in nature thus casts a trophy at His feet, and owns Him her Lord!

We have already witnessed, on the shores of the Lake, His power over bodily diseases. We have seen the leper cleansed by His touch. The centurion's servant healed by a distant message. Now would He shew that "dragons, and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and vapour, *stormy wind,*" are equally ready to "fulfil His word." "He spake, and it was done." There are no laboured means required. The intervention of no rod, as in the case of Moses, to stretch over the deep. From the fishing-vessel, as His throne, He issued His behest. Every wave rocked itself to rest. The winds returned to their chambers. The lights on the shore were once more reflected in the waveless sea;—"*Immediately there was a great calm.*" Well might the disciples, as they beheld the power of that marvellous mandate, exclaim, in the words of their Psalmist King, as they crouched adoring at their Master's

feet, "*The sea is His, and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land. Oh, come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker!*"

While we exult in the *Humanity*, let us evermore exult in the *Deity* of Christ. Had Deity not inhabited the bosom of that sleeping *Man*, the disciples must have had a yawning sepulchre in these depths. We should have had to tell this day of nothing save ruined souls and a sinking world. It was *Deity* which impressed an untold value on all His doing and dying. Take away the great key-stone of Christianity, —that Godhead dwelt in the bosom of Messiah,—and our hopes for eternity lie buried with His unrisen Body in the Grave at Jerusalem. But "His name is Immanuel, GOD with us." While we look up to heaven and see a MAN upon the throne, we can at the same time exclaim, "Thy Throne, O GOD, is for ever and ever!" The combination of the two in the one person of the Everliving Redeemer, makes Him all we need, all we can desire.

It is, indeed, in His *glorified* Humanity He there lives and reigns. He needs no longer, as at this Eventide Scene on Gennesaret, earthly repose. His period of weakness, His struggle with human infirmity, is over. We need not, like the disciples, now go to awake Him; for in yonder glorious Heaven "*He fainteth not, neither is weary.*" "He that keepeth Israel" now "neither slumbers nor sleeps." But His heart of love knows no change. He is "*that same Jesus,*" our God yet our Brother, our Brother yet our God!

There may be comfort to some here in the thought (more especially brought before us in this passage in connexion with Christ's deity) that *He ruleth over winds and waves.* "What

manner of man," exclaimed the disciples, "is this, for even the winds and the sea obey Him." No storm that sweeps the ocean can defy His power, or resist His control. These boisterous elements are His ministers and messengers. Not one storm-cloud can gather—not one crested wave rise—not one timber can start—without His permission, who "holdeth the winds in His fists." All power is committed to Him in Heaven and on Earth. The Prince of the power of the air, if some mysterious dominion be there assigned Him, has a mightier to control His demon rage; and whether it be the atmosphere that comes loaded with plague and fever, pestilence and cholera—or the hurricane that uproots a forest and overturns a house, burying a loved child in the ruins—or the tornado that strews the bosom of the ocean with the pride of navies, or sends wailing and widowhood into the fisherman's lonely dwelling—"THE LORD sitteth upon the floods; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever." "The floods, O LORD, have lifted up, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. But THE LORD ON HIGH *is mightier than the noise of many waters; yea, than the mighty waves of the sea!*"

But, II. The text speaks, not only "*concerning Christ,*" but "CONCERNING HIS CHURCH." This both in its *collective* and in its *individual* capacity.

In previously considering the miraculous draught, we found the fishes enclosed in the net were designed to form an instructive pledge and symbol to the "Fishers of Men" of the success of their labours. If the *Fish* were thus typical of immortal souls, the element in which they lived, the heaving,

changing, restless water, with its fitful alternations of calm and tempest, was surely no inappropriate picture of human life, swept with storms and strewed with wrecks. And if, as we believe, each portion of this sacred incident is fraught with symbolic instruction, we may warrantably look also for some figurative truth in that tossed vessel with its affrighted crew. Nor is there much difficulty in finding its true place in the Sacred Allegory. If the Ark of Noah, in the olden *patriarchal* deluge, was not only a befitting type of the Church, but was really THE *Church* of *God*, tossed on that raging flood, have we not in this *Gennesaret* vessel the *Gospel* type and symbol of the same—the Church *in* the world, and yet not OF the world;—subject to the storms of persecution, often hurried into guilty fears and faithless distrust and misgiving;—yet her Lord, not (as in the extremity of her unbelief she sometimes supposes), like Baal, slumbering and sleeping, but seated invisible at her helm, guiding her through the roaring surge, and enabling her to ride out the tempest!

At no period has the Church been exempt from such hurricanes. Even in these our days (though, thank God, the outer storm is hushed, and she is holding on her way in these favoured lands through calm and tranquil seas), there are discerning spirits who can catch up distant indistinct mutterings—presages of a coming tempest, more fearful than any she has yet buffeted—"the sea and the waves roaring, and men's hearts failing them for fear." If, ere the Millenial morning break, there is thus a deeper and darker night of trial in reserve for the Church of Christ;—Satan and his demon-throng, riding on the wings of persecution, putting

forth their last giant effort for her destruction,—be it ours to exult in the thought that there is a *Sleepless* PILOT at her helm, who can say, like His great Apostle in Adria, "I exhort you to be of good cheer." "GOD *is in the midst of her: she shall not be moved:* THE LORD *shall help her, and that right early.*"

(2.) This passage speaks concerning the Church in her *individual capacity.*

It speaks of Disciple life and Disciple experience. It is easy for us to speak and theorise about Faith, but God often casts us into the crucible to try our gold, and separate it from the dross and alloy. He brings us into the vortex of the storm to see whether we shall wring our hands in faithless despair or rush to our Master. The disciples in *Gennesaret* had acted unfaithfully—unconfidingly. They might have known that, though the wail and death-shriek of perishing crews had been heard all around, *one* bark at least would have defied the rush of waters and roar of winds. *With* JESUS *in their midst,* they need have feared no evil. The simple fact of His presence ought to have been pledge and guarantee enough that their safety was secured. If some more craven spirit than the rest had urged His being roused, —some impetuous Peter, in his eager impulsive haste, had hurried to the stern to utter his unbelieving fears—we should have expected some one of the others of calmer mould and stronger faith, some John or James, to have arrested the intruder, saying, "Disturb Him not!" Sooner shall these mountains that gird the lake be removed than He suffer "one of His little ones to perish." Let us gaze in calm serenity

on the face of the Almighty Sleeper. Let us "*be still and know that He is* GOD!"

But, alas! for the moment they seem all to have been involved in the same unworthy perturbation — "*Master, Master! carest Thou not that we perish?*"

We cannot, we dare not, to a certain extent, wonder at their fear. So far it was natural. There was much to awaken apprehension. Their ship reeling on the waves, and their Lord appearing unconscious of their danger "asleep on a pillow." It was the *excess* of their terror which drew forth the rebuke. Each Evangelist in recording it gives a slight variation. One says, "*Ye have little faith;*" another, "*Where is your faith?*" a third, "*Ye have no faith.*" But in all the three cases it is the lack of FAITH which is blamed; the want of that principle which "casts out *fear.*" We may wonder, perhaps, at the severity of the condemnation. Was Faith on their part really so utterly wanting? Did not rather their very rushing to their sleeping Lord seem to indicate the intensity of their trust in that perilous crisis-hour? They felt that if they are to be rescued at all from a dreadful grave, it can be by *Him* alone. Yet, observe, He rebukes them, as if their Faith were poor, trifling, unworthy of the name!

How is this?—It is plain that His condemnation of it is *relative.* It is judged by a standard of its own. Had some of the *multitude* (not the disciples) manned this vessel, and rushed thus imploringly in the tempest to awake Him, probably, as in the case of the Gentile Centurion, Jesus would have commended their faith as *great.* But these misgiving ones were those who should have known better than to dis-

trust for one moment His ability and willingness to save. Had they witnessed to so little purpose His recent miracles? Had they heard with so little profit His recent Discourse of heavenly wisdom? Unkind and cruel surely in the extreme, in the case of trusted friends, was the cry with which they roused Him, "CAREST *Thou not that we perish?*" Anything to that beneficent Being would have been less cutting and wounding than *this*—"CAREST *Thou not!*" It was doubting not His power but His *Love,* that love to which every hour since they knew Him had borne testimony.

How kindly, gently, considerately, yet faithfully, He deals with them! He utters no reproach for that rude *awaking,*—robbing Him of the slumber He so greatly needed, and which His untiring energy elsewhere denied Him. But, gazing with earnestness upon them, He puts the penetrating question, which must have gone like an arrow to their hearts, "*Why are ye so fearful?*" He speaks as a faithful Master to His faithless disciples before He turns to speak to the elements. The winds and waves He allows to revel at will before He has delivered in the hearing of the Voyagers the word of needed reproof. He has no ear for the warring elements, until, in mingled severity and kindness, He has poured oil on the troubled sea of these vexed hearts.

Are any of *us* thus fearful? Jesus turns to us and says "*Wilt thou not trust Me?* Look at Calvary's Cross! Is *that* not a pledge and guarantee that I will never leave thee nor forsake thee? For a small moment I may *appear* to have forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee—with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee!"

Let this be with us, as with the disciples, the result of all

these storms of Trial—to drive us nearer our Heavenly Master, and endear Him to our souls. They wondered at the moment, doubtless, what could be the cause of such a storm. Why not have arrested it or kept it chained in its mountain hold, till that bark with its valued crew got safe to land?

Thus they may have reasoned while the tempest was overhead, and their hearts failed them for fear. But what was their verdict when they were planting their anchor in the white shingle on the Gadara shore. They said one to another, "*What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?*" Their Lord rose higher than ever in their estimation. In the future manifold sacred memories of that wondrous ministry, how the combined remembrance of the *weary* MAN and the *Almighty* GOD would brace them for their great fight of afflictions! That "PEACE, BE STILL," has been a motto and watchword which these howling winds of Gennesaret have wafted from age to age and from clime to clime, sustaining faith in sinking hearts, and producing in many a storm-swept bosom a "GREAT CALM!"

Oh, happy for us if all the hurricanes that ruffle life's unquiet sea have the effect of making Jesus more precious. If God has to employ stormy trials, severe afflictions, for this end, let us not quarrel with His wise ordination. Better the storm *with* Christ than the smooth water *without* Him—

> "Far more the treach'rous calm I dread
> Than tempests bursting overhead."

It is the experience, not of the luxurious Barrack, but of the tented field, the trench and night-watch, which makes the better and hardier soldier. It is not the exotic nursed in

glass and artificial heat which is the type of strength; but the plant struggling for existence on bleak cliffs, or the pine battling with Alpine gusts, or shivering amid Alpine snows. If there be a sight in the spiritual world more glorious than another, it is when one sees (as may often be seen,) a Believer growing in strength and trust in God, by reason of his very *trials;*—battered down by storm and hail, a great fight of afflictions—enduring loss of substance—loss of health—loss of friends—yet, standing by emptied coffers and full graves, and with an aching but resigned heart, enabled to say "*Heart and flesh do faint and fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever!*"

Never let us take our trials as an indication that God is not with us; saying, like Martha, in our blind unbelief, "*Lord, if Thou hadst been here*, this never would have happened. The Saviour cannot have been at my side, else this desolating storm would never have swept over me." Nay, He *was* with the disciples—sleeping in their very boat—when the Gennesaret hurricane descended. "BEHOLD," says the Evangelist (as if arresting our attention to the fact), "BEHOLD" (when He is voyaging with His *own* apostles) "*there arose a great tempest.*"* And often is it so still. He selects the blackest cloud, and causes His people to pass through it, that He may span it with His Rainbow of mercy, and shew in blended colours, His power, and faithfulness, and love!

And what remains, but to urge you to flee to that same adorable Saviour, and to cast all your cares on Him who

* Matt. viii. 24.

has shewn you, at such a cost, how He careth for *you*. Ye who are in perplexity temptation, trial,—environed with storms of unbelief and doubt and inward corruption,—go to your Lord as the disciples did. They give you a new testimony to *the power of Prayer*. It was *Prayer* that roused their Divine Master. *He continued asleep till His disciples awoke Him*. And the great principle in the dispensation of His spiritual gifts still is, "*Ask, and ye shall receive.*" How beautifully is here brought out His willingness to hear the cries of His perishing people! All the roar of elemental war—the voice of wind, and rain, and mountain waves—awakes Him *not; but the cries and entreaties of His people, at once reach His ear!*

Let us, then, arise and call upon our God. The great lesson taught both to the Disciples and to us in this storm, is, that *in nearness to Jesus lies all our safety*. *Weak* faith, and *Little* faith, as well as *Great* faith, are encouraged to rush to this Great Deliverer. The world is at best a treacherous sea. Its Painted Barks may hold on for a while their uncertain course, spreading their white wings before summer gales and favouring breezes. But a sudden hurricane comes; the waters are strewed with their wrecks, and "the place which once knew them knows them no more!" But, safe in the Ark of God, steered by the Heavenly Pilot, we are as secure as combined omnipotence and love *can* make us. And when earthly storms are all over, every crested wave of a chequered past will only endear to us more the Haven of rest, where the tempest's voice will be never more either felt or feared!

XI.

The Spoiler Spoiled.

They know th' Almighty's power,
Who, waken'd by the rushing midnight shower,
Watch for the fitful breeze
To howl and chafe amid the bending trees—
Watch for the still white gleam
To bathe the landscape in a fiery stream,
Touching the tremulous eye with sense of light
Too rapid and too pure for all but angel sight.

They know th' Almighty's love,
Who, when the whirlwinds rock the topmost grove,
Stand in the shade, and hear
The tumult with a deep exulting fear;
How, in their fiercest sway,
Curb'd by some power unseen they die away—
Like a bold steed that owns his rider's arm,
Proud to be check'd and sooth'd by that o'ermastering charm.

But there are storms within
That heave the struggling heart with wilder din,
And there is power and love
The Maniac's rushing frenzy to reprove;
And when he takes his seat,
Clothed and in calmness at his Saviour's feet,
Is not the power as strange—the love as blest,
As when He said, Be still, and ocean sank to rest?

"And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains."—MATT. viii. 28-34; MARK v. 1-20; LUKE viii. 26-40.

THE SPOILER SPOILED.

We now follow our Lord's footsteps, for the first time, to the eastern shores of Gennesaret. Striking must have been the contrast between their sterile aspect and the cultivated beauty with which we have hitherto been familiar around Capernaum. Hills, with a few patches of cultivation, rose slanting from the water's edge, unrefreshed by those rills and water-courses which formed nature's contribution to the life of the western side. If we add to an ungenial climate and the absence of soil, exposure, as at this day, to the incursion of the adjoining desert hordes, we find an additional reason for the comparatively scanty inhabitants — the near and strange proximity of intense activity to desolation and barrenness.* It was a border land "of darkness and the shadow of death," abandoned to a mixed population of Jew and Gentile; animals clean and unclean—the sheep of the Hebrews, the swine of the Gentiles—browsing on contiguous pastures. No rich plain or undulating slopes fringed, as on the opposite shore, the margin of the lake, on which "the sower" could "go forth to sow." If that memorable parable were suggested by an incident seen in the fields of the one side, the parable of the lost sheep,† roaming through a trackless waste, had its appropriate scenery on the other. These Eastern wilds formed

* For a description of the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, see Lord Lindsay's Travels, Burkhardt, and Stanley's Sinai and Palestine, *passim*.

† The preceding references in the history connect it with Galilee. Stanley, *in loco*.

"the desert place," to which Christ, on other occasions, invited the disciples to "go and rest awhile." The very solitude of this wilderness was a pleasing refuge to Him from unceasing labour. There, amid nature's ragged temples and oratories, her Great Maker and Lord "ofttimes resorted," for purposes of meditation and prayer.

Such is the befitting frame for that terrible picture which we are now to contemplate; a theme uninviting in itself, and encompassed with not a few difficulties—but which, occurring, as it does, in the order of the narrative, we dare not pass in silence.

The description of the *Gadarene Demoniac* is given by the first three Evangelists. We shall avail ourselves of the notices peculiar to each, taking as the ground-work that of St Mark, which is distinguished (as most of his other narrations are) for minuteness and fidelity in all its parts. His is evidently the narrative of an *eye-witness;* and, connected in some way, as we have good reason to believe the writing of his Gospel was, with St Peter,—the Evangelist and the Apostle-spectator, in compiling their inspired narratives, have retained, with graphic power, each feature of the thrilling incident.

Let us look first to THE PICTURE itself, and then examine its DETAILS. In other words, let us describe the general SCENE, and afterwards, from its several parts, deduce some general LESSONS.

Recent travellers inform us that opposite the town of Tiberias, on the eastern shore, a recess is formed in the mountains, where there are still the remains of a Jewish burying-ground. Caves, either natural or artificial, are hollowed out

of the rock, while the ruins of a city crown the heights at the top of the valley.* There is a strong presumption in favour of this being the locality of the scene presented to us in the passage we are now considering.

In our last chapter, we found the Lord and His Apostles suddenly overtaken by a storm in the midst of the Lake—no ordinary storm, as the narrative infers,—but one which led the disciple fishermen, who knew these waters so well, to cower in terror at their Master's feet.

But what is this to the *moral hurricane* which sweeps down upon them the moment their anchor is planted on the eastern beach?

Out of one of these rocky tombs or sepulchres, a Being in Human shape, rushes with fleet foot down the intervening

* "The particulars are such as specially suit one spot only on the eastern side—the central ravine of the Wady Fik, nearly opposite Tiberias. The 'tombs,' from which the demoniac issued the moment that he saw the boat touch the shore, would be those hewn in the rock on the approach to the ancient city, whether of Gamala or Hippos, which still crowns a height at the top of the ravine."—*Stanley*, p. 376.

The following is Josephus' description of Gamala (J. B. iv. 1, 1), in his account of the terrible carnage around its walls during the wars of Vespasian:—

"It was situated upon a rough ridge of a high mountain, with a kind of neck in the middle. Where it begins to ascend it lengthens itself, and declines as much downward before as behind, insomuch that it is like a camel in figure, from whence it is so named, although the people of the country do not describe it accurately. Both on the side and the face there are abrupt parts, divided from the rest, and ending in vast deep valleys; yet are the parts behind, where they are joined to the mountain, somewhat easier of ascent than the other; but then the people of the place have cut an oblique ditch there, and made that hard to be ascended also. On its acclivity, which is straight, houses are built, and those very thick and close to one another. The city also hangs so strangely, that it looks as if it would fall down itself, so sharp is it at the top. It is exposed to the south, and its southern mount, which reaches to an immense height, was in the nature of a citadel to the city; and above that was a precipice, not walled about, but extending itself to an immense depth. There was also a spring of water within the wall, at the utmost limits of the city."

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY

slope, with wild gestures and cries. Mournful was his history! He is no madman or maniac bereft of reason, the victim of a disordered fancy or bewildered imagination—a deeper and darker woe broods over him.

One of the spirits from "*the abyss*"—an infernal demon, or rather a whole legion of them—had taken possession of that wretched body, and set it on fire of hell! It is altogether a misconception to give to this passage a mere figurative rendering—to resolve this Demoniac's case into a mere affliction of insanity, a disorganisation of the brain. Some would do so to evade the difficulties of the question. But by thus rejecting the express declaration of Scripture, they only escape one perplexity to involve themselves in another. If Demoniacal possession had been a mere crude fancy of the Jews—a popular delusion—can we for a moment entertain the idea, that He who came on earth to bear witness to TRUTH would have fostered among his disciples or their countrymen belief in a superstitious lie?—that He would have misnamed mere aberration of the intellect, by calling it *the possession of a devil?** No, we only do honour alike to Christ and to His Sacred Word when we accept, in the fullest sense, its literal averments, though they may do violence at times to our feelings, and cross our carnal reason.

We know that often and again, in the course of His ministry, the Saviour makes special allusion to the personality and presence of Evil Spirits. In exorcising these, He addresses *personal* agents. He speaks to an *individual*, not to a *disease*, "Hold THY peace and come out of him!"

At the period of the advent of the Prince of *Light*, there

* See this ably put by Mr Trench.

seems to have been an especial forthputting of the might of the Prince of *Darkness*. The "Strong man armed" was invaded in his territory by the "Stronger than he." Till now his subordinate ministers sat unchallenged on their vice-regal thrones; the blinded nations bowed before them in abject fealty. But his kingdom is doomed. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

Will his empire be resigned without a struggle? Nay! His confederate legions are gathered especially in and around the land of Judea. Every shaft is taken from his armoury, to avert, if possible, the signal, impending ruin.

In that very Storm on the Sea, there may (as we surmised) have been demon-spirits giving strength to the hurricane,—mustering in diabolic rage the destructive forces of nature, under some mad delusion that they might possibly effect the ruin of the Voyagers, and thus prevent the discomfiture they seem to have known too well was at hand.

Terrible seems to have been the subjection of the miserable Being now before us, who was led captive by their will! They had driven him into "solitary places." Perhaps, under the bitter consciousness of the demon power within him, he had himself sought the deepest solitudes of nature, to be screened there from his more favoured fellows. Moreover, as if solitude intense enough could not be found amid these desert hills, the misanthrope had made his home "amid the tombs," places which, from his happier infancy, he had been taught to regard as "unclean," and to rush from their unhallowed contact.

There he is!—"the living among the dead"—half envying the ghastly repose of the crumbling bones and skeletons that

strewed the caves where he dwelt! A supernatural muscular strength had been imparted to him. Again and again had the neighbouring Gadarenes, for their own protection and safety, attempted to curb his fury, binding him with iron chains and "fetters;" * but *these* he had broken like withs—snapped as tow. In frantic *delirium* he roamed the adjoining mountains, while, in his wilder paroxysms, he was "driven by the Spirit into the wilderness"—the bleak, flat desert which stretched far away from the hills that girdled the Lake.

Under perhaps a consciousness of deep guilt as the cause of his misery, the narrative further describes him as the Victim of self-torture,—"crying and cutting himself with stones." They had attempted to clothe him, but in his demon rage every rag of raiment had been torn from his bleeding, lacerated body. A highway seems to have led from the town to the shore, but "no one now could pass that way." Travellers avoided the haunted approach. He was the terror of the neighbourhood; not by day only but at night too, when all around was silent and still, the piteous wailings of the demoniac awoke the echoes of the mountains and startled the fishermen in their lonely night-watch on the sea! †

And yet, by carefully attending to the narrative, you will observe that there is in that tempest-tossed spirit a strange

* "For the feet."—*Olshausen*, 274.

† The following description, from Warburton's "Crescent and the Cross," quoted by Trench and others, affords a singular illustration of the Gospel narrative:—"On descending from these heights (Lebanon), I found myself in *a cemetery*, whose sculptured turbans shewed me that the neighbouring village was Moslem. The silence of the night was now broken *by fierce yells and howlings*, which I discovered proceeded *from a naked maniac*, who was fighting with some wild dogs for a bone. The moment he perceived me he left his canine comrades, and, bounding along with rapid strides, seized my horse's bridle, and almost forced him backward over the cliff by the gripe he held of the powerful Mameluke bit."

mysterious blending of human consciousness and fiendish hate—an interweaving of truth and error—a confounding of his own personality with that of the devils. His own nature is crushed to the dust by some savage tormentor lording it over him; yet the overmastered soul (the nobler being of the man) seems ever and anon to rise to the surface, and to utter longings for emancipation. It was thus not an entire wreck of the inner life. There are chinks and openings that appear every now and then in that deep, dark, dungeon-spirit —rays and flashes of nobler thought and aspiration that are ever revealing themselves, although only to bring into sadder and more fearful contrast the prevailing gloom. I repeat it, however, this very misery of his tells us he was not an utterly abandoned and hopeless Castaway. Had he been so, conscience would have crouched a submissive slave at the feet of these demon powers. No cry for deliverance would have rung through these solitudes; the man, assimilated to the fiends within him, would have rather rushed affrighted from contact with infinite Purity, Power, and Goodness.

But, so far from this, there is evidently a struggle (though a seemingly hopeless one) in that tortured frame. He would spurn, if he could, this alien tyrant-power that was detaining him in unwilling bondage, and throw open the temple gates of his soul to a nobler Owner. As he roams from rock to rock, and from tomb to tomb, a cry for emancipation seems to mingle with the wild wailings which ring through the vaults of the dead,—"Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?"*

* See Olshausen, Stier, and Trench, *in loco*.

Is there no response to that wild appeal? ONE, and *One only*, in the wide world can hush the tempest of that storm-swept soul, and say, "*Peace, be still!*" *That* ONE is *nigh!* The Demoniac, from the increased perturbation and tumult of his spirit, may have had some presentiment given him that the Deliverer was now approaching. It is possible that, in his moments of lucid consciousness, he may have heard of a Great Prophet who, in the synagogue on the opposite side of the lake, had expelled demons from bosoms like his. Hoping against hope, that *he*, too, might not be beyond reach of the omnipotent *word*, he may have been watching with eager longing each boat that dropped its sails as it neared that solitary strand. At all events, no sooner does the fishing-vessel with the Lord and his disciples, touch the Gadara shore, than we see him hastening down the slope, and the next moment he is a suppliant at the Redeemer's feet!

In this act we recognise *the man* himself—his own nobler nature. The demon, for the instant, has lost the ascendant, and degraded humanity asserts its right to be heard.

"*Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit!*" exclaims the voice of Him who must have beheld with touching emotion the human soul made "a habitation of devils"—ruined, dishonoured, enslaved!

But the lucid moment has already passed into the demon mood. The spirit within him stifles the struggles of his better self. Seizing hold of the man's speech and utterance, he thus breaks silence, disowning Christ's interference, "*What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most High God? I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not.*"

The Demoniac, upon this, reeled back at the sight of his Deliverer, and fell anew into a convulsive paroxysm.*

It may seem, at first, strange, that obedience to Jesus' omnipotent command could be for a moment delayed. Doubtless He could have enforced an immediate compliance; and He must have had wise reasons for permitting the demon to retain for an instant longer, his infuriate mastery, after He had uttered the mandate of expulsion. It has been supposed, that in putting the question to the Demoniac, "*What is thy name?*" He wished, before his last and most fearful paroxysm, to restore him to personal consciousness—to the remembrance of his earlier history and better times. But here, again, either the indwelling demon anticipates the reply—once more seizing on his organs of speech as if the question had been addressed to *him;* or, it may be, the wretched man, confusing again his own personality with that of the devils, answered, saying, "*My name is Legion, for we are many.*" LEGION! (a *Phalanx*—a compact squadron of Imperial Rome in battle array), is his own description of the invading spirits of darkness that had run riot within him! His whole inner being had been wildly torn and dislocated by a host of infernal fiends—"the rulers of the darkness of this world—spiritual wickednesses in high places."

But what are all these before the might of Incarnate Omnipotence? Too well did they know the power of Him they owned and recognised as the "Son of God most High." With the same remarkable interchange of personality, either the Demoniac himself, or the possessing devils, importune the

* "The better self, in its enlightened season, discerned a helper; the hostile power, when it gained the predominance, saw the Judge."—*Olshausen.*

Saviour not to send them to "*the deep*" (or *the abyss*),* the awful abode of Apostate Spirits—the place of final doom and condemnation.

In the parallel passage in St Matthew, they are represented as crying out as they addressed Jesus, "*Art Thou come hither to torment us* BEFORE THE TIME." What time? It was the hour which they knew too well was numbered, when, with their Great Leader, they should be cast into the bottomless pit, "prepared for the devil and his angels."

Their further request, "not to be sent out of the country," was equivalent to the other. It seemed a current belief among the Jews, that each region or district was under the sway of Good Angels and Wicked Demons. If the demons, in the present instance, had been expelled their allotted region at Gadara, it would have been tantamount to anticipating their certain doom—sending them beforehand to the awful "*abyss*" which was to form their future and everlasting dwelling.

We need not linger on the sequel of the narrative, nor on the needless and unprofitable questions to which it has given rise. Two thousand swine were feeding on one of the adjoining mountains. Our Lord, in His sovereignty, grants the startling request of the demons, that, instead of being driven out of the country, they might be permitted to enter into the animals. As a subordinate reason, this permission may have been given as a righteous retribution for the owners keeping, in a Hebrew territory, what was in direct contravention of the Jewish law, (swine being reckoned unclean). Be this as it may, the herd, being entered by the fiends, rush headlong in

* Ἄβυσσος.

frantic rage to the crags or slopes overhanging the lake. One after another, each following its blind leader, they leap over the precipices, and are engulphed in the waters below. The swineherds fly in consternation to the adjoining city. The inhabitants hurry out to verify with their own eyes the strange rumours which had reached them. Not only do they find the herd perishing in the waters, but, stranger than all, the scourge and terror of the region is sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind!

Oh! wondrous triumph over hellish confederacy! Mighty as was that Voice which, an hour before, had chained the tempests and bridled the storm; more wondrous still was that which could put a curb on the untameable spirit of a hapless wreck of humanity! "*This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles!*"

Let us now look, as we proposed, at this Picture in its various parts or details—at its lights and shadows—the dark side and the bright side. In doing so, we have, in the dark side, the *Possessor* and the *Possessed;* in the bright side, the *Restorer* and the *Restored.*

I. THE POSSESSOR.

How awful the truth that is here brought before us;—the sway which Satan *had,* and still *has,* in our earth! Thanks be to God it was the culmination of his power at that great crisis-time in the world's history—emphatically "*the* Hour and Power of Darkness." How terrible that power must have been, when the First Apostle who died—"Satan entering into him"—died a suicide and a traitor; and the first two

disciples of the Christian apostles—"Satan filling their hearts" —died liars and hypocrites.*

Christ, in vision, saw him "fall as lightning from heaven." On the cross, He bruised his head, plucked the jewels from his crown, rescued from him the usurped dominion of *Life*, and, as the Moral Conqueror, ascending up on high, He dragged him and "captive multitudes captive," at the wheels of His triumphant chariot. Yet still does the Arch-deceiver "*rule* among the children of disobedience." "Let not any one think," says Luther, "the devil is now dead; for as He that *keepeth* Israel, so he that *hateth* Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps." Cases, indeed, of "*possession*" of the human body, are either now at an end, or are comparatively rare. It would be presumption to speak with confidence on a subject in which we have such limited *data* to guide us. One thing, at all events, is plain, that if such cases *do* occur, they are not so palpable as then. Satan seeks now to conceal his dominion. His name is the "*Prince of darkness*," and he delights to work in *the dark*. Jesus, on the shores of Gennesaret, *forced* him to speak out. He dragged to light the demon-horde that had converted a living man into a raving fiend. The raging lion was driven from his lair. He was *exposed*, in the very act of "seeking whom he might devour." *Now*, he continues to lie concealed in the thicket,—he succeeds once more in silently and stealthily seizing his victim, binding not the *body* with iron chains, but the soul with moral and spiritual fetters, and degrading it into a "habitation of dragons." "He so conceals his agency," says an able writer, "that while we fancy we are sailing before the im-

* Howson and Conybeare's "St Paul."

pulse, and floating down the stream of our own free volitions, his hand is on the helm; thus flattering our pride, scoffing at our weakness, and steering our destiny at the same time."*

We dare not ignore this truth of the existence and personality of Satan with his subordinate evil angels,—his "dominions, principalities, and powers"—an organised consolidated agency of evil. Vast must be their multitude!—the air around us, for aught we know, is thronged with their myriad ranks!—their assaults only parried by the counterworking agency of Good Angels—those whom God gives charge to "encamp round about His people, and bear them up in all their ways."

Let us not be guilty of rushing to a false inference from this doctrine, that it is incompatible with the freedom of a moral agent—that it diminishes our moral responsibility—that we may plead, as an excuse for our sins, that we have become the helpless victims of a power *without* us—that (by a harsh fate which we cannot control) we are "delivered over unto Satan."

Nay, verily. While the Bible *does* everywhere admit the existence of that extraneous power, and traces to *it* the authorship of evil—"*Satan* hath filled thine heart,"—"*Satan* entered into Judas,"—"Get thee behind me, *Satan;*"—yet the Satan *without,* has his echo in the evil heart *within;* the *temptation* is *Satan's;* the crime and guilt is our own. "They *sell themselves,*" says God, "to work iniquity. If we are set on fire of hell, the fuel is our own collecting. Every yielding to sin on our part, allows the deeper insertion of the wedge on Satan's—an opening wider of the heart's doorway

* Dr Harris.

to let the invader in. The same Bible which tells of the dread sovereignty of the arch-apostate and his legions, commands us to "RESIST the devil, and he will flee from us."

Beware of his first encroachments. If, like the inhabitants of Jerusalem of old, you give him of the gold of the Temple to propitiate him, this will only lead him to make bolder demands till the Temple be laid in ruins. Your safety consists in living near to God—soaring above the wiles of the Great Adversary on the wings of faith and prayer. "Surely in vain," we read in a striking verse in Proverbs, "the net is spread in the sight of any bird" (or as that is rendered in the margin of our Bibles, "in the sight of him *that moveth on the wing*"). In vain will Satan spread his gins, and snares, and nets, in the sight of the Believer, who, on the soaring pinions of his renewed, regenerated nature, rises above the fascinations of the world—the toils of sin—singing, as he soars to heaven's gate,—"I desire a better country, that is, an heavenly!"

Turn we now from the *Possessor* to the POSSESSED.

What a terrible spectacle! a Human Body—God's own Temple—become a desecrated shrine, the haunt and residence of the sworn enemy of His throne and His universe! The man lapsed into the fiend. A Hell in embryo!

How had he, we are led to inquire, become the subject of so terrible a destiny? Was it a mere capricious exercise of demon-rage that selected an innocent victim, and made him the sport of unmerited wrong, so embittering life as to cause death to be a happy release—a welcome termination to ignominious torture?

We have no clue, indeed, in the narrative that would lead us to connect the man's present sufferings with his previous history. But there is at least a strong presumption that his own guilty excesses had invited the terrible assault. This legion-company may have been roaming the district in search of a victim. Lo! the gates of a corrupt and corrupting soul were found open for their entrance;—a body debilitated by gross passions, wallowing in sensuality, the whole nervous system, shattered and unstrung, bid welcome to the wandering horde. Conscience—the conscience of innocent days, when a pure mind dwelt in an unpolluted frame—now and then awoke up to a sense of present guilt and forfeited innocence. But the demon-throng were ever watching to crush the aspirations of nobler life, and hurry him at last as their companion to the abyss!

This gives an awful reality to the Picture before us, and invests it with utterances of pathetic warning. Ah, is it not to be feared that it is the actual picture of many who, in the words of Scripture, "give themselves over to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness," paying for their excesses the terrible penalty of a shattered body, a ruined soul, and a maniac's end!

Would that youth, in the hot fever of its passions, if unrestrained by loftier Bible motives, would come with us to Gadara, and gaze on the picture of its inevitable fate—this awful *Bible picture* of SENSUAL EXCESS! Would that those who have surrendered themselves to tyrant lusts—pandering to base appetite, destroying and enervating their bodily frames—would mark here the terrible destiny awaiting them. Our own asylums can, at this hour, furnish many a counter-

part. See yonder wretch—half man, half fiend—coiled up, shuddering with terror, in one of the midnight tombs of Galilee, clutching the ground in the wildness of despair—the chains dangling by his side, and the blood streaming from suicidal wounds—his body turned into a living grave! SLAVES OF ABANDONED LUST!—"*Oh that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your* LATTER END."

We pass to a more pleasing theme—the *bright* side of the Picture—to the RESTORER and the RESTORED. Here (as in all the other Gospel scenes we have hitherto contemplated) stands out, in bright and beautiful contrast, the DIVINE SAVIOUR—the *Restorer of the lost*, the *Comforter of the cast down.*

If ever there was a case, which, we might have thought, would have repelled Infinite Goodness and Infinite Purity, it is that which we are now considering. No Lazar-house more loathsome or polluted than *this.* Joined to his filthy idols—the trail of the serpent in every chamber of imagery—Christ might well have said, "Let him alone!"

But who can "limit" the Holy One of Israel? He will leave behind in that wild region, if He should never visit it again, ONE ever-during memorial of His grace and power. He would tell His church and people in every age, that if Satan is mighty, there is a *mightier* still;—that over this legion dominion "all power is committed" to the "Stronger" than the "strong man." He has only to utter the word, and the demons surrender their prey, and crouch submissive at His feet!

Moreover, adverting to a still further exhibition of the Sa-

viour's power in the sequel of the narrative, observe the Devils *would* not and *dared* not enter into the herd of swine, until they had received His permissive word "Go." Blessed assurance! Satan's power is bounded! Satan's Lord says now, as then, "*Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed!*"

Both from the case of this Gadarene Demoniac and the one in the Synagogue of Capernaum, we learn, that, great as was the sway of Satan over the bodies and souls of men, it was not such as to prevent them betaking themselves to Jesus, and seeking His mercy If this were so at a time when the influence of the great Adversary was at its height, we may take comfort in the assurance that no *power* of Satan can now deter us fleeing to the "*Power* of God;" that if our Faith and Hope is built upon that *Rock*, "the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." *

And further, in connexion with the Restorer of this Demoniac, we have the assurance that there is a period of triumph at hand—a time coming when Satan's kingdom shall be destroyed, when Jesus shall put him and all other enemies "under his feet."

That Satanic Empire got its final and greatest blow on the cross of Calvary. "Now," said Jesus, when that cross was projecting its shadow on his path, "shall the Prince of this world be cast out!" It was even so. "As He bowed His head, and cried, 'It is finished!' he dragged the pillars of the Usurper's Empire to the dust." And if "we see not yet all things put under Him," we know on infallible authority that victory *does* await the Prince of life. The chain is already

* See "Blunt's Lectures," vol. ii. p. 21.

forged which is to bind the destroyer. Ever since the day when his serried legions were routed at Calvary, the leal subjects of his Divine Conqueror have been following up the triumph of their Lord, gathering spoils and trophies from the nations so long enthralled—the Great Captain of Salvation "*from henceforth expecting, until His enemies be made His footstool.*"

Ye who are feeling at times downcast by reason of "the depths of Satan," mourning over his power alike in your own hearts, in the church of God, and in the world; remember his doom is sealed! Jesus can say of each one of His people as of Gad of old, "*A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last.*" We can anticipate with confidence the predicted period when the tyranny of six thousand years shall end—Satan and all his discomfited legions strewn, like the hosts of Egypt, on the shores of Time—and, in the words of God to His true Israel, "The enemies ye have seen to-day, ye shall see no more for ever."

Finally, Let us contemplate THE RESTORED.

How beautiful this calm sunset after a storm-wreathed sky! His fellow-citizens come out in numbers to witness the prodigy—the once infuriated man sitting, like a child, at the feet of his deliverer, "clothed, and in his right mind." A vaster than mere deliverance from a bodily thraldom would seem to have been *his*—it was a translation all at once "out of darkness into *marvellous* light." No captive hurried from the world's darkest and most pestilential dungeon to breathe the pure light of day, ever experienced the gladsome sensations of this Restored *Demoniac.*

Can we wonder at his fervent wish, as his Lord and the

disciples are once more about to depart and cross the Lake, that he might be allowed to accompany them? What, he might naturally think, may be the consequence when my deliverer is gone? A new irruption, either of the old legion or of a fresh relay from the Hosts of Darkness, may be made on this trembling frame, and my last state may be "worse than the first." How natural that he should cling in grateful love to that mighty Being, who had "brought him out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set his feet upon a Rock, and established his goings, and put a new song into his mouth, even praise unto our God." "HOWBEIT *Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.*" *

We cannot pronounce what may have been the special object Jesus had in giving this man such express injunctions to publish his cure, while the same publicity, as you will remember, he strictly forbade in the case of the Leper.

It has been surmised that a previous profligate life had involved his acquaintances and friends in his guilt and ruin, and he may have been sent specially to warn *them*, lest theirs might be the same terrible doom without the same hope of deliverance. Christ's refusal to allow him to accompany him may, moreover, have been intended as a great lesson for all—that true rest and repose in a Saviour's presence is reserved for heaven; that life has great duties and great responsibilities; that religion is not a thing to be thrust into a corner, the joys of which are to be selfishly appropriated, without one effort to impart them to others; but home, friends, country,

* Mark v. 19.

human kind, are the successive spheres for the operation of our Christian influence. Shining first and brightest in our own dwellings, the light of truth must radiate to the earth's circumference.

While from this man's history there is a voice of terrible *warning,* there is a voice surely also of *encouragement* and *mercy.*

Are there any whose eyes may fall on these pages conscious of a lifetime of sin? trembling on the brink of despair, fearful lest all be lost? ONE has come to the shores of a desolate world; He has encountered tempests of wrath, that He might reach your homes and hearts of wretchedness with the word of pardon and peace! Oh, flee to Him without delay. Your spiritual adversaries may be many—"their name is *legion*"—but *One* is on your side, *alone,* but OMNIPOTENT. "GOD *is for you, who can be against you?*"

Yes, there is no room to despair. Blessed be His name, there are none debarred and excluded from mercy, and to whom we may not utter the free message, "*Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.*"

With these demons of the text the case was different. With *them* Hope was extinguished. *Their* probation time had come and gone; their mighty game for Eternity had been staked and lost; their die was cast, and cast for ever! "*What have* WE *to do with* THEE?" was their too truthful theology. The door of mercy on *them* was irrevocably *shut.* They had "*gone to their own place!*"

But it is with *you* as with the demoniac! A Saviour's voice can still reach you—a Saviour's blood can still wash you! You may up to this hour have been "wretched,

miserable, poor, blind, naked," but His grace can bring you submissive to His feet;—seat you there "clothed, and in your right mind," clad in the spotless raiment of His imputed righteousness!

"*Behold the goodness and severity of God—on them that fell severity, but on us goodness if we continue in His goodness!*"

See that that goodness be not spurned. Flee to that Saviour's feet while yet He tarries on the earthly side of the Lake. Soon He may depart;—soon He may recross the waters--the opportunity of meeting Him may be past! This was probably the one solitary visit He ever made to the Gadarenes. It may be the same to us. See that our conduct be not a copy of theirs, bidding Him *begone*, "praying Him to depart out of our coasts." He may never return. He may take us at our word. He may prove in *this*, by stern reality "*a prayer-answering God.*"

Might He not have so dealt with us ere now? How often, already, have we rejected Him? Oh! if He had done to us, as he did to the Gadarenes—granted our request—where should we have been at this hour?

But still He lingers! The anchor of Hope still clings to the sands of Time. Still is He "waiting to be gracious." "*If thou seek Him He will be found of thee,* BUT *if thou forsake Him,* HE WILL CAST THEE OFF FOR EVER!"

XII.

The Only Daughter.

Fondly I prized that lovely mind
  Where all was gentle, sweet, and mild;
A thousand blooming flowers entwined
  The earth-bower of my sainted child!

Forth sped the doom—"Return to dust!"
  In the cold grave my treasure lies;
I was a traitor to my trust,
  I got it not to idolise!

* * * * * *

Hush! breaking heart, that pines and weeps,
  Laughing the holy word to scorn,
"The maiden is not dead but sleeps;"
  You 'll meet her on the Heavenly morn!

"And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue; and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying."—LUKE viii. 41, 42; MATT. ix. 18; MARK v. 22–43.

THE ONLY DAUGHTER.

THE two last incidents we considered, were the *Storm on the Lake*, and the more terrible picture on its eastern shore, of *the Gadarene Demoniac.*

"The Man Christ Jesus," oppressed with fatigue of body and exhaustion of spirit, lay stretched, fast asleep, in the hinder part of a fishing-vessel, till roused by His disciples from His needed repose, to allay the tempest. On landing, we found Him encountering a victim of Satanic rage—a bosom more troubled than earth's most unquiet sea! But to the *moral* storm, as to the *natural*, He had said, "Peace, be still!" Then, as a strange sequel to this miracle, the Gadarenes "prayed Him to depart out of their coasts." In obedience to their ungrateful wish, He has taken ship, once more, to the western side, where the people are already lining the beach, eager to welcome Him.

And what is the first recorded incident in connexion with the Lord and His disciples, as they again tread the streets of Capernaum? They had left behind them a fearful monument of *Sin.* They are called now to behold *Sin's* terrible consequences!

Ah! *Death!*—thou unsparing Foe!—terrible Invader!—Severer of the firmest of earthly bonds—causing, from the hour of the fall, one loud wail of suffering to arise from the households thou hast swept—converting the world itself into one

vast sepulchre—its teeming millions a long burial procession to the one long home!—every heart beating its own "funeral march to the grave!" *But* the Prince and Lord of *Life* now draws near. Thou art about to be stormed in thine own citadel,—compelled to relinquish thy prey; and to every bosom in all time which thou art rudely to rifle, there are consolatory words and lessons to be gathered from this scene we are now to consider.

Let us first rehearse the narrative; and then endeavour to gather up some of the more solemn and comforting truths which that narrative enforces.

We have no further light thrown in Gospel story, on the principal personage in this scene. He was Ruler or Prefect of the synagogue of CAPERNAUM; supposed to be one of those "elders of the Jews" we previously found coming in a body or deputation, to intercede with Jesus in behalf of the Centurion's servant,* saying, that "he was worthy for whom he should do this, for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue."

This pious Israelite had urged his suit successfully for another,—the slave of a Gentile soldier who had been stretched on a couch of sickness, "ready to die." The Divine philanthropist had listened to the pleadings of faith and gratitude, and straightway accompanied him in the direction of that soldier's abode.

But a far tenderer case now engrosses this Ruler's thoughts, —a far tenderer sorrow weighs down his own heart. The grim Messenger is now standing at his own portal!

* Luke vii. 4, 5.

An Only Daughter, like the one Ewe lamb of the prophet's parable, gladdened his home. She had arrived, too, just at that age when a father's heart-strings are bound fastest and firmest around his child's soul, and ere the world had time to taint or stain her with its corruptions. With that child had been doubtless interwoven every thought of the future;—she was the pride of the family,—the prop of the present,—the promised solace of her parents' old age. Often perhaps, in the midst of other trials, they would glance at the loving spirit at their side, and say, "*This same shall comfort us.*" But health and strength, youth and intelligence, are unable to exclude the sleepless foe of human happiness. The shadows of death are falling around that dwelling; and it is the one they least dreamt of, that is marked out to fall!

We have not detailed to us, as in the case of Lazarus, the circumstantials of that hour of anxiety and sorrow; whether disease had crept imperceptibly upon her; the King of terrors coming with noiseless step—velvet-footfall; the taper of decaying life burning down slowly till it reached its socket; or whether, with appalling suddenness, the arrow had sped —the sun, which perhaps that morning rose on a cheerful home, setting over the valley of death, amid weeping clouds. All the entry we have in the inspired Record is, "She lay a dying." She had reached that terrible crisis-hour when hope's last glimmerings were being extinguished—the last tides of life were slowly ebbing—that sun was "going down while it was yet day!"

Can nought be done to arrest the arrow in its course—to stay that sun from so premature a setting? The anguished

father thinks of ONE, and ONE alone, who can say, "Sun, stand thou still!"

"Can that same Jesus" (he might think to himself), "who cured a humble Slave, who gave back to a fond Master the life of a faithful servant"—*can* He not (*will He* not) pity "one of the lost sheep of the house of Israel?" *Will* He, *can* He, if I rush to Him in this hour of my sorrow, deny me His pitying love, and the exercise of His wondrous power?"

There is no time for delay. With fleet footstep he rushes to the feet of the Prophet of Galilee, and in an agony of prayer beseeches Him to follow him to his dwelling. The Saviour obeys; accompanied by a promiscuous crowd, among whom deeper and holier feelings and sympathies mingle with vain curiosity. As He hastens in the direction of this home of death, we may mark, in passing, the discriminating tenderness of the Redeemer's sympathy in all the three recorded cases of His raising from the dead—at *Capernaum*, at *Nain*, at *Bethany;*—an only *Daughter*, an only *Son*, an only *Brother!*

An incident, meanwhile, takes place by the way, which for a time impedes His progress. A woman, "with an issue of blood," steals unobserved through the thronging crowd, touches the blue fringe of the Lord's garment, and receives an instantaneous cure. But instead of passing, as we might expect, with all haste to the more urgent case, Jesus pauses and dwells on this intermediate one. He summons into His presence the subject of His healing power, in order that He may manifest to others the victory of *faith*, and utter in her own ear, words of encouragement and peace.

Hard, unseasonable interruption, we are apt to think! Each moment was precious to that trembling parent. The sand-glass of that loved one's life was hurrying to its last grain. He might have reached her in time, had it not been for *this*. But the likelihood is that the golden opportunity is past and gone; these few minutes' delay have cost the Father his child—locked her fast in a sleep too deep to be disturbed!

And yet, we may well believe, there were gracious purposes in this, as there ever are in much which our blindness is apt to regard as untoward and unpropitious. The *smaller* miracle—(the intermediate cure)—would prepare the crowd for receiving the *greater* one. Above all, it would strengthen and confirm the faith of the witnessing parent,—lead him to hope against hope, and, in the extremity of his anguish, make him "strong in faith, giving glory to God."* We hear from his lips no fretful and impatient utterances—no insinuations against his Lord, or against the other suppliant, regarding the delay. Meekly he waits the Redeemer's time and will; and erelong he shall have the promise fulfilled in his experience: "The Lord is good to them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him." "It is good for a man that he both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God."

But just at the moment when faith has got its pledge of Divine power,—when the procession is again in motion, and joyous visions of the past are beginning to people the future, messengers from his homestead are the bearers of heavy tidings: "*Thy daughter is dead, trouble not the master!*" "Fatigue not (as the word means), that weary, toil-worn Saviour;—add not to his journey or exhaustion. Let Him

* See Trench, *in loco*.

have the rest He so much requires; His presence could be of no avail now, for death has put his impressive, irrevocable seal on these lips."

Ah! bitter intelligence! Just when hope was in the ascendant—when the future was beginning again to have its rainbow hues spanning a dark sky,—these tints melt and merge into a deeper darkness than before. The torch is quenched. The great dreaded blight of existence has passed over the parent's heart!

Now is the time for Jesus' utterances of comfort; for now was the moment when doubt and misgiving were most likely to rise and eclipse the hitherto triumphant actings of *faith.* Now was the time for those harsh thoughts of rebellious nature, we have already hinted at, which so often, at such seasons, overmaster our nobler feelings. "If it had been but a few moments sooner, my child might have been spared! If the Lord had only postponed the performance of that other act of love till He had left my threshold, I might still have had my gourd blossoming around me! It was these moments of delay that bereft me of my household treasure. By stopping to give peace to one sufferer, He has done so at the sacrifice of all that most fondly bound me to earth!"

If these, and thoughts like these, were about to arise, Christ in mercy interposes. We read, "Jesus answered," (not that Jairus out-spoke his own feelings, but He who reads the secret heart *answered* to what was passing in the heaving depths of that soul)—"Hush! hush!" He seems to say, "suffer not these thoughts to arise in your heart; dismiss all such unworthy doubts." "*Be not afraid, only believe.*"

And now He has reached the house. The trappings and

outward pageantry of death too truthfully verify the tidings of the messengers. In accordance with oriental custom, hired mourners and hired minstrels were already filling that silent chamber with dirges; while with these mingled the deeper and truer wailings of the smitten hearts.

"*Give place!*" said Christ, as in a tone of authority He rebuked these vehement demonstrations of mimic sorrow—"*Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but* SLEEPETH." An enigmatical expression to the tumultuous mob around, but to the father, it was the renewal and repetition under a lovely figure of the former pacifying utterance, "*Be not afraid, only believe.*" The word "*dead*"—the utterance of the human messengers, too well calculated to annihilate the last spark of hope—is replaced by the rekindling word, "*she sleeps.*"* Man has put the terrible extinguisher on that lamp. But Jesus says, "*Fear not.*" What is that message of *death*, when *I*, the Lord of life, have been summoned by you? You have seen my power on a suffering woman;—"*only believe*, and I will shew you *greater things than these.*"

The irreverent thronging crowd are kept outside. The mimic mourners are all excluded. His three favoured disciples (afterwards the witnesses of His transfiguration on the Mount, and of His agony in the garden), are alone allowed to enter the chamber sacred to sorrow. In dumb emotion the two parents are bending over their withered flower. But so also is He who gave it—who planted it—who plucked it—and who is to give it back again. In the might of His own omnipotence—in *His own name* (without invoking, like His

* See Stier, vol. i, p. 412.

prophets or apostles under similar circumstances, any higher power), death is summoned to yield His Victim. "*He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi, I say unto thee, arise.*" The sleeper awoke. The prostrate Lily raises its drooping head, and sheds once more its fragrance in that joyous home. That happy Israelite might well take up the words of his great ancestor, which he had so often read in the synagogue service, but perhaps without being ever before touched by them: "*Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing, Thou hast put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness, to the end that my glory may give praise to Thee, and not be silent. O Lord, my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.*"

Let us now seek to ponder one or two of those practical lessons with which this scene and passage are replete.

I. The first lesson we may gather from the text is, that *all are exposed to domestic bereavement.*

It may seem unkind to break the trance of earthly bliss by referring to the possibility, far less the certainty, of trial. And yet it is needful, ever and anon, solemnly to repeat the warning that you and yours "will not live alway."

If God has hitherto put upon your household the exempting mark—if the destroying angel has passed by your door unscathed—if you have no vacant chair at your home-hearth, no yawning chasm in your heart of hearts—you are the exception, not the rule. God knows we have no gloomy pleasure in being prophets of evil. It is a poor gospel to dwell on harrowing thoughts of death—the shroud—the grave! But I would take these as preachers, to enforce the

lesson daily taught us, "*Be ye also ready.*" Yes, sooner or later, each one of us, parents and children, shall be brought to learn the solemn truth, "*I am about to die.*" And if there be one who peruses these pages, who, like the minstrels of whom we have been speaking, is ready to have a smile on his lips, and to "laugh to scorn" a trite commonplace which every one knows and many care not to hear;—if youth in its strength, or manhood in its prime, is saying inwardly, "No fear of me," "My mountain is standing strong,"—we would say to him with deep solemnity, "*Thou fool, this night thy soul may be required of thee!*"

Parents may well listen to a special word of solemn admonition. The death spoken of in the text was that of a child "twelve years of age." While this tells that your children may, at any age or at any time, be taken from you, it ought to urge upon you fidelity to your immortal trust. If you would wish the richest of all solaces when you are bereft of them, deal faithfully with their souls now. Do not allow any false shame to prevent you in all seriousness speaking to them of the things which belong to their everlasting peace. If you should ever come to mourn over an early grave, to you it will be the sweetest of all consolations if you can think that that "buried treasure of yearning hearts" was the subject of a mother's prayers and a father's counsels—that under that grassy sod there sleeps the child who from earliest years you had "lent to the Lord." On the other hand, it will be the bitterest of reflections (the iron truly will enter into your soul), if you have to weep burning tears of anguish over parental unfaithfulness and neglect. Bereft of that hope, "*My child is in glory,*" you will be bereft indeed!

II. We learn from this passage, that *we need trials to bring us near to God.*

It was his child's sickness that drove Jairus to the feet of Jesus. But for that home-trial his faith would never have been exercised, nor his love and gratitude evoked. While in health and prosperity, we are apt to take God's gifts as matters of course. It is not till the storm rises, that, with these atheist hearts of ours, (like the heathen sailors in Jonah's vessel), we fall upon our knees and feel that our only safety is in Him "who ruleth the raging of the seas." Yes! when God makes breaches in our households—when He brings home to us the truth that our existence, and the existence of our children, is a perpetual miracle—when we discover that those little lives, Pillars in our households, which we have vainly thought were pillars of *iron*, turn out to be pillars of *dust;*—when the solid alabaster discovers itself to be the melting *snow-wreath*, —*then* are we driven to discover what is the alone imperishable Portion!

If God be visiting any one of you with the deep experience of trial, it is that He may speak *home* to you. Never does He speak so gently, so wisely, so loudly, so solemnly, as when He asserts His right to take away what He originally gave. See, in the text, the unbelieving, laughing, mocking crowd, are disqualified to hear Jesus. They have "passed at a bound" from their mimic sorrow to heartless mirth; simulators—actors—they are thrust out of that Holy Presence. But the *stricken* Parents are taken into the favoured circle. They gaze upwards from the face of the dead on Him who is "*fairer* than the children of men." In such a Presence unbelief is hushed, and faith is ready to hear "what God the

Lord has to say unto their souls." How many can tell, "*But* for the death of that *Parent*, that *Brother*, that *Sister*, that *Child*, I should have been to this hour without God and without hope!"

III. Let us learn, from the incident of the text, *the comfort of Prayer in the hour of sickness and death.*

This Ruler, we read, "*fell at Jesus' feet, and* BESOUGHT *him* GREATLY, *saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death; I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed!*"

Trial drove Jairus in his hour of dreaded bereavement to prayer, and "the effectual fervent prayer of this righteous man availed much."

The same blessed refuge is open for us in times of sickness. When our friends or our children are stretched on beds of suffering and death, we can take their cases to God, and plead with *Him* in their behalf at the Mercy Seat. We must not indeed dream that our prayers (as they were in the case of the Jewish ruler) *must* necessarily be answered, and that at *our* earthly bidding a *miracle* should follow. This would be *presumption*, not *faith;* this would be to usurp the *Sovereignty* of God—to substitute our own wisdom for *His*,—it would be to make *our* will and not *His* paramount. If we had only to speak and it was accomplished, it would make man *God*, and degrade God to the level of *man*. It would be to dishonour the Almighty, making Him the servant of the creature—not the creature waiting on in loving trustfulness as the servant of the Creator.* Far, far better is it for the

* See Robertson's Sermons, Second Series, p. 47.

lowly suppliant to endorse every petition with the words, "*Father, not my will but thine be done.*"

And yet, let us remember for our comfort, that prayers at a death-bed (apparently unheard and unanswered) are not in vain. They may smooth the death-pillow. They may remove from it its thorns, and put the promises of Christ in their stead. They may lead sorrowing survivors to lowly resignation, and disarm earthly reflections of their poignant sting. Yes! forget not this, when seasons of family trial overtake you—when the best of earthly means and instrumentality prove inefficacious, and those near and dear to you are hovering on the confines of the grave. Do not sit down wringing your hands in despair, as if Jehovah were, like Baal, asleep or on a journey, and His ear deaf, when you most need His intervention. Arise, call upon thy God! Plead the assurance that *if* in accordance with that *better will* and *wisdom* "the prayer of faith SHALL save the sick."

The Patriarch David of old, is a rebuke in this respect to the lack of faith in many a Christian parent now. For *seven whole days* was he stretched on the bare earth importunate for his infant's life, "Who can tell," said he, "whether God may be gracious to me that my child may live?" Not till the little spark had fled, and the sad accents fell on his ear, "*Thy child is dead,*" did the prayer melt into the bright hope full of immortality,—"*I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me!*"

IV. *Learn the nature of real sorrow.*

He who wept at the grave of Lazarus does not forbid *Tears.* They are holy things, consecrated by Incarnate tenderness.

Let the world, if they may, condemn it as unmanly to grieve, —or worse, let them seek oblivion for their trials in the giddy round of its pleasures and follies, and make the grave of their dead as soon as may be "the land of forgetfulness." He encourages no such cold and stern stoicism. But, on the other hand, neither does He countenance overmuch sorrow. True Christian grief is calm, tranquil, chastened. The noisy, wailing, mimic crowd are spurned from the scene. If they had been the tears of a Martha or Mary, He would have held them as sacred;—but being the hollow echoes of unfeeling hearts, He says, "*Give place; why make ye this ado and weep?*"

Jesus, on every occasion in his public ministry, stamps with His abhorrence all *pretence*. He dislikes *unreality*, what is made to *appear* gold which is tinsel;—whether it be simulated joy, or simulated piety, or simulated tears. That is a poor sorrow which expends itself in funeral trappings,—which is measured by doleful looks, and passionate words, and mourning weeds. True grief is not like the stream which murmurs and frets because it passes over a shallow bed;—that which is deepest makes least noise. Inconsolable sorrow is unbecoming the Christian. To abandon one's self to sullen gloom, moping melancholy and discontent, is sadly to miss and mistake the great design of trial. God sends it to wake us up to a sense of life's realities—not to fold our hands, but to be more in earnest than ever in our work and warfare. Oh! when He sees meet to enter our households, and, as the Great Proprietor of life, to resume His own, be it ours to thank Him for the precious loan, to acknowledge His right and prerogative to recall the grant. "The Lord loveth a

cheerful giver." Although it was in a trial, of which, God forbid either you or I should ever know the bitterness, I know not in all Scripture a more touching picture of this silent acquiescence in God's sovereign will than we have in the case of a parent who had seen his two worthless children smitten down before his eyes, and yet of whom we only read that "AARON HELD HIS PEACE."

V. Finally, let us learn from this passage that *Christ is the Great Vanquisher of Death.*

Previously we have traced His footsteps of mercy and power as the Healer of diseases—the Saviour of the body—the Lord of nature—the Ruler of the Spirit. We have seen Pain crouching importunate at His feet; Penitence creeping meekly at His side bedewing Him with tears; Sickness at His summons taking wings and fleeing away.

But now he has reached a new era in His life of marvel. He has broken the withs of Death. He has gathered in the first sheaf of that mighty Harvest of life, of which the angels are to be the Reapers in the Resurrection morning.

He gives us here a comforting assurance; first, regarding the *Dying*, and second, regarding the *Dead.*

(1.) He tells us regarding every *death-bed*—that the thread of existence is in His hands—that He quickeneth and restoreth whom He will—that unto Him as "God the Lord, belong the issues of death."

"Thy daughter is dead;" (said bold human unbelief) "trouble not the Master." But the message is premature. *He* has inverted the sand glass. He has made the shadow as in Hezekiah's dial to go back!

Oh, glorious assurance! Our lives and the lives of all near and dear to us are in HIS keeping. It is *He* who sends the angel messenger. It is He who marks every tree in the forest—plucks every flower in the garden. My health and sickness, my joys and sorrows, my friends, my children, are in the hands of the CHRIST OF CALVARY! We, in our blind unbelief, may regard Death as some arbitrary Tyrant lording it, with iron sceptre, over hapless victims. But the Gospel teaches a nobler philosophy. It tells of One in heaven who has in His hands "the keys of the grave and of death," and who, at the time He sees best, but not one moment sooner, "turneth man to destruction, and sayeth, Return, ye children of men!"

(2.) He gives us a comforting word regarding *the* DEAD. Christian, He says of thy dead (the dead in Christ), "Be not *afraid*, only *believe*." "Weep not; she is not dead, but *sleepeth*." Yea, weep not! she is not dead, but LIVETH!

Death is but *a quiet sleep*. Soon the morning hour shall strike;—the waking time of immortality arrive, and the voice of Jesus will be heard saying,—"I go that I may awake them out of sleep."

It has been often noted that there is a beautiful and striking *progression* in our Lord's three miraculous raisings from the dead.* This instance, we have been considering, was the *first* in point of time. The daughter of Jairus was raised immediately after death had taken place, when the body was still laid on its death-couch. Her soul had but taken its flight to the spirit-world, when the angels that bore it away were summoned to restore it. The *second*, in order of time,

* See Olshausen, Stier, Trench, and others

was the raising of the son of the widow of Nain. Death had in this case achieved a longer triumph. The wonted time for lamentation had intervened;—he was being borne to his last home when the voice of Deity sounded over his bier. The *third* and last of this class of miracles, was the raising of Lazarus of Bethany. In his case, death had attained a still more signal mastery. The funeral obsequies were over;—the sepulchral grotto held in its embrace their loved and lost;—four days had these lips been sealed before the life-giving and life-restoring word was uttered.

There is *one other* gigantic step in this progression. "*The hour is coming when they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth.*"

In the first case we have cited, the time elapsing between the dismissal of the spirit and its recall, was measured by *moments*, the second by *hours*, the third by *days;* the fourth is measured by *centuries—ages*—MILLENNIUMS! But what of that? What though we speak of the tomb as the "long home," and death as the long sleep? By Him (with whom a thousand years is as one day) that precious, because redeemed dust, shall be gathered together, particle by particle. "*I will ransom them,*" says He, as he looks forward through the vista of ages to this glorious consummation—"*I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O! death, I will be thy plagues: O! grave, I will be thy destruction.*" Blessed, thrice blessed time! As in the case of Jairus, it was his own loved daughter who, in form and feature, was again restored: as the widow of Nain gazed on the unaltered countenance of her own cherished boy: as the sisters of

Lazarus saw in him who came forth from the grave, no alien form strangely altered, but the Brother of their hearts,—so, we believe, on that wondrous Morning of immortality, shall the loved on earth wear their old familiar smiles and loving looks. They shall retain their personal identity. Nay, further, as in the case of the daughter in the text, her *Parents* received her once more into their arms;—as in the case of the widow's son, it is expressly said, "*they delivered him to his* MOTHER;"—as in Bethany, we are allowed to look into the home circle again reunited, Jesus once more loving "Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus," and they loving one another—so may we believe that, on the Resurrection day, the affections which hallowed homesteads on earth, shall not be dulled, quenched, annihilated, but rather ennobled and purified. Brothers, sisters, parents, children, shall be linked once more in the fond ties and memories of earth, gathering in loving groups around the living fountains of waters, and singing together the twofold anthem of Providence and Grace—"*the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb!*"

If we descend for a moment from these lofty contemplations, it is to utter a brief word, in conclusion, to those who know nothing of such glorious hopes—who are locked in the slumbers of a far sadder Death. Yes! there is a more dreadful *sleep*—a more dreadful *death*—than that of the Grave! They are rather to be envied who have "fallen asleep" (or as the word means) who have been "*laid asleep* by Jesus." Faith, in her noblest musings, would not weep them back from their crowns, and denude them of their bliss! But *they* are to be pitied who are still slumbering on in the deep

sepulchral stillness of *spiritual* death—that death from which there can only be, a waking up in anguish! With deep solemnity would I say, "*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life!*"

When we are called, as at times we are, to hear of death-beds in every phase of life—in every stage of the chequered journey;—manhood in the sere and yellow leaf—youth in its prime—childhood in its innocence—infancy in its tenderest bud; or when these truths come home to us as arrows feathered from our own bosoms—solemn thoughts welling up from the very deeps of our being; I know not what will make a man in earnest if such impressive lessons fail to do so! Reader! If God were to meet *you* to-night, could *you* meet HIM? Would you be ready for the Opened Books and the Great Assize? Nothing—*nothing* will be of any avail at that hour, but the life of faith in the Son of God; not the wretched peradventure of a death-bed repentance, but an honest, loving, cordial closing NOW, with that great Salvation.

It is but a slender thread that binds us to existence; every moment, "Verily there is but a step between us and death." Oh, that we may so live, that that step may be regarded as a step between us and Glory; and that, when the final summons comes, it may be to us—what weeping friends cannot see—the Chariots of Salvation and the Horses of fire, waiting to bear us to Paradise!

XIII.

The Life of Sacrifice.

" There are in this loud stunning tide
  Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
  Of th' everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart,
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat."

" And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him."—LUKE v. 27, 32; MATT. ix. 9, 10; MARK ii. 14.

THE LIFE OF SACRIFICE.

We cannot be sure what precise chronological place among the Memories of Gennesaret the calling of St Matthew should occupy. But we cannot be far wrong in considering it as having occurred in immediate connexion with the incidents on which we have been recently dwelling.

Of the previous personal history of the future Evangelist we know nothing. But a flood of light is thrown upon his character, and the position he occupied in Capernaum, by the worldly profession from which he was taken to be a Follower and Apostle of Jesus.

If any one name or class was more hated than another among the Jews, it was that of the *Publicans*. These, as is well known, were the collectors of the impost laid on the Jewish nation by the foreign power by which they were subjugated. The impatience of the Hebrews under the Roman yoke rendered taxation in any shape peculiarly offensive. The odium of the public burdens themselves, came to be shared by the officers who exacted them, so much so, that it was only the more degraded among their countrymen who could be found willing to accept pay and place, reckoned at once servile and degrading. It was written in their law (Deut. xvii. 15), "*Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee which is not thy brother.*" The Hebrew that would stoop to collect these revenues (badges of national dishonour), was

considered guilty of an infraction of their sacred code,—denounced as having done homage to an alien and heathen master.

There are never wanting, however, in any community, mean-souled, covetous men,—men of iron will by nature, and that indurated by practice, who will venture, at any risk, to brave public opinion, and stoop to have their mammon-spirit gratified. The office of Publican was an easy road to emolument; and a man destitute of self-respect, who was reckless about losing his character, or rather who had no character to lose, would not be scrupulous in accepting this lucrative office under Cæsar. The *farming* of these taxes, moreover, afforded the publicans additional opportunities for indulging in tyrannical exaction and fraud. Any appeal from their overcharges was carried to a Roman tribunal, where the case was often prejudged, and the chance of redress rendered wellnigh hopeless. The civil rulers never deemed it politic to encourage resistance to their subordinate officers. Thus *Might* too often triumphed over *Right;* while the appellants, in anticipation of an adverse decision, could readily disarm the hostility of the tax-gatherer by means of a secret bribe. The code of morality among the Publicans, you can thus see at once, was that of the lowest description. We cease to wonder at the disgust in which they were held by the rest of the population. The severest thing a proud Pharisee could say was, "*God, I thank thee I am not as this Publican.*" The daughters of Israel scorned alliance with them in marriage. Their testimony was not received at the civil tribunals. It was a common saying among the Jews, "that vows made to thieves, murderers, and PUBLICANS, might be broken," and

when our Lord himself spake of an incorrigible offender, one who, from persistence in wrong-doing, was to be excommunicated from the Church, He says, "Let him be to thee as an heathen man and a PUBLICAN."

There may have been exceptions, indeed, among the class we are speaking of,—individuals of nobler parts, who were not so unscrupulous and overreaching as others. We have nothing, however, to entitle us to consider LEVI (or *Matthew*) in any more favourable light than as an *average* specimen of his calling. His toll for impost or "receipt of custom" seems to have been at the port of Capernaum. *There* he was seated when Jesus met him, receiving dues, probably on the timber that was floated from the northern and eastern part of the Lake, or on more valuable mercantile commodities on their way south to the seaport of Ptolemais, from the markets of Damascus and the other towns of Syria.

The question is one of no great importance whether the calling and conversion of the first Evangelist was *sudden,* or whether it had been preceded by processes of anxious thought, —severe mental and spiritual struggles.

Most probably the latter. Though we never dare limit the omnipotence and sovereignty of Divine grace, it seems more in accordance with God's wonted dealings, and the analogy in His other works, to connect the great moral change known as *conversion,* with certain means and instrumentality; not making it the offspring of blind, unreasoning impulse. Who can tell, that, though unknown to his fellow tax-gatherers or to the thronging crowds which rudely jostled and wrangled around his place of business, there had been for long a silent, secret, unnoticed work going on in that man's soul!

For days—for weeks—conscience may have been speaking; the thought of a debased moral nature, grasping avarice, illicit gains, may have been disturbing his peace by day, and his dreams by night. He may, long ere this, have been an auditor of the discourses of the Great Prophet, and a witness of His miracles. He may have listened to some of those Divine lessons in which a lofty morality had been inculcated, to which *he*, alas! had long been a stranger. How terribly would his whole life stand rebuked by the utterance of these golden words—they may have gone like a barbed arrow into his soul—"*Do to others as ye would that they should do unto you:*" "*Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again, and ye shall be the children of the Highest.*" As another Publican, at a later date, swung himself on the branch of a sycamore tree to attract the notice of the Holy Teacher, so may this officer of Capernaum have followed the crowd of stragglers to the Mount of Beatitudes, or heard, amid the pauses of traffic, some gracious words which sank into his soul, and stirred the deeps of his being.

Who can picture the conflict that may have ensued between nature and grace, principle and conscience, mammon and God? He may have long felt the heavenly impulse before he dared to avow it;—a desire to renounce his sinful and fraudulent ways; but the old arguments, "My subsistence, my gains, my family," crushed and smothered better thoughts. He may have been for long what the old writers call "a *Borderer*," wavering and hovering on the confines of light and darkness; the pendulum vibrating between two worlds! *But* INCARNATE TRUTH confronts him, and the whole lie of

his former being melts before the rays of that Glorious Sun. Jesus *comes, sees* him, and by an omnipotent word and look, *conquers!* Joined to the Son of God and Saviour of the world by this outward act and inward principle of life and love, he has become "a new creature;"—"All old things have passed away, and all things have become new."

The same great change must take place with regard to all of us before we can enter the kingdom of God. There must be a leaving behind us of all that is of the earth earthy, and a cleaving with full purpose of heart to the Lord who died for us. Let us not deceive ourselves with the thought that some external profession—acting up to some conventional standard of religion recognised by the community in which we dwell—Sabbath forms of devotion and weekly worldliness —will save us, and stand us instead of saving conversion. Much less, that some fond dreams of future amendment will exempt us from the need of present repentance and crucifixion of sin in the heart and life. Let us remember the words of Him who never made one hard exaction, or imposed one unnecessary burden—"*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.*" If any are disposed to feel that such denial is unreasonable, if not impossible, come with us to the Port of Capernaum; and as we gaze on that scene of worldly traffic, and hear a voice in the midst of it, saying, "*Follow me,*" let us endeavour to weigh well all that is comprehended in the willing response—when Matthew "*left all, rose up, and followed Jesus.*"

We might examine the conduct of Matthew from many

points of view, but we shall illustrate it, at present, under one aspect, (an aspect which the Church in modern times may do well to ponder), viz., as A LIFE OF SACRIFICE.

I. The conversion of Matthew involved A SACRIFICE OF THE WORLD.

A pecuniary sacrifice is all the greater if the man who makes it is naturally avaricious and covetous. We can quite well imagine an individual who is happily exempt from the passion of money-making, counting it no great hardship to take some step involving a diminution in earthly gain. But it is no small struggle with him who has, from youth up, been a cringing worshipper of mammon, to cast the hoarded treasure from his grasp, and throw himself penniless on the world.

Such was the case with Matthew. If he had not been naturally a covetous man, the chances are all against his being found seated at the custom-house of Capernaum. Moreover, that this particular "receipt of custom" was a lucrative one, is further evinced by the fact, that he was able, on quitting it for ever, to make a sumptuous feast for his friends and former associates. It was different with *him* in this respect from the other apostles. Fishermen on the lake—their sole riches consisted in a joint fishing-vessel with its tackle, and the precarious gains of their daily toil. What a test of his sincerity—that he was swayed by some mighty principle superior to nature—that in one moment he was able to surrender at his Lord's bidding his golden prize, and cast in his lot with the despised and homeless Saviour of Galilee. Yes; the world might not have wondered that he thus left his original

calling had there been some carnal and lucrative equivalent held out in the other. But it was all the reverse. That Saviour had taken care to undeceive every adherent who clung to hopes of worldly advancement—"*The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.*" Yet, with this prospect of poverty—disgrace—contempt—the Publican willingly renounced his earthly *all*. At the very moment his coffers are filling, behind the pressing crowd around his tribute table, he sees a Divine countenance, and listens to a Divine call. The glittering coin—the idol of his life—was in a moment forsaken; that loving *look*, that cogent *word*, are more to him than "thousands of gold and silver," and waiting not to count the cost, or debate the expediency, he threw in his lot with the Prophet of Nazareth.

What an example for *us!* Are we willing to make similar sacrifices for the glory of God's name? Ah! rather, how poor, and feeble, and inadequate are our most self-denying efforts when compared with those of this Hebrew tax-gatherer. *He* left his *all;*—gave God his *best*, and kept the remnants to *himself*. *We* give God our *remnants*, and keep our *best* to ourselves. *He* left his worldly gain at Christ's bidding;—what have we left? what have we sacrificed? What mites have we thrown into his treasury! Often only the crumbs and sweepings of guilty extravagance. Would that every believer—every member of the Christian priesthood—would come to consider his possessions, his houses and lands, his wealth, his money, not as a mere property to be selfishly used, but as a talent to be employed for the good of man and the glory of God,—a trust committed to his charge *by* God and

for God, and in respect of which his stewardship will at last be rigidly scrutinised. It may seem to the carnal, worldly mind a hard saying—who can bear it?—to leave ALL and follow the Saviour. But who that has pondered the story of Redeeming love, can call aught unreasonable *that* Lord requires? Glance upwards to Him who thus demands the surrender, and remember how willingly and cheerfully *He* left His all for *us!* The noblest instance of renunciation on the part of His people is but a mere shadow—dust in the balance—in comparison with that self-sacrificing love which exchanged a Throne for a manger—a Crown for a cross. How does that noble appeal of the Great Apostle make all the sacrifices of man pale into nothingness like the rushlight before the sun—"*Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus, who, though he were rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich*"

II. We have just now spoken of Matthew's sacrifice of the World; there was another still greater sacrifice he proved by his deeds he was willing to make—THE SACRIFICE OF SELF.

The unpretentious, unboastful, unostentatious spirit of this Israelite is beautifully exemplified by one or two almost unnoticed touches in the inspired records. As if covered with shame and confusion at the remembrance of the past, he seems anxious to utter no word which would go to magnify himself, or exalt his own character and doings.

While other Evangelists speak of a "*Great* Feast" he made, and to which he invited Jesus, *he* says nothing as to its *greatness* in his own Gospel—all the reference he makes to it is, "*Jesus sat at meat in the house.*" While

Luke speaks of it as his *own* house, *he* leaves the particular house indefinite.

Again, in speaking of forsaking his calling at the bidding of his Saviour, while St Luke speaks of him as leaving "*all*" and following, he himself omits the words "Left ALL." But for the fidelity of his brother Evangelist the amount of his self-sacrifice would have been left unrecorded. He is content with the more modest entry, "*He rose and followed.*"

The other Evangelists, in classifying the Apostles, two and two, give *him* the precedence of Thomas; *he* reverses the order, Thomas *first*, himself *last*.

While the others put a becoming veil over his former life by inserting his other name (*Levi*), he has no such scruple, but adopts the old title with the unenviable notoriety it had on the shores of *Gennesaret*. Nay, more, if you consult his list of the apostleship, and compare it with the others, he would seem desirous to hide from view all in himself that was *praiseworthy*, and to magnify the grace of God in his conversion, by bringing into prominence all that was *blameworthy* In the list of Apostles given by his fellow Evangelists there is no account given of their respective worldly callings, but *he* makes in his own case and name a strange exception—he styles and subscribes himself, "*Matthew*, THE PUBLICAN." Oh, how unlike self and self-love is all this! When a man has committed some great fault in his past life,—when there is some *scar* in his history, how careful is he to hide it from the world, or if this he cannot do, to palliate and extenuate his conduct as best he can. A bankrupt cares not to speak of his insolvency. Whether it be his misfortune or his crime, it is a proscribed, and shunned, and forbidden theme. But Matthew, as

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY

a converted man, would have others to know what the grace of God had done in his behalf. As the lights of a picture have a value and strength given to them by the disposition of *shadow, he* brings into prominence the *shades* in his past spiritual life to give power to that light which had "shined into his heart," even "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In writing his Gospel—that sacred record which was to be read by millions on millions—what an opportunity, had self been paramount, of displaying his own character to the best advantage. But the whole narrative of his conversion is there merely incidental. It is hidden among a crowd of other sacred facts. What of all he recorded could have made such an indelible impression on his own mind,—what memory half so hallowed or momentous, as when his Lord, in ineffable love, stood confronting his custom-house, and gave that never-to-be-forgotten *word*, whose echoes to his latest hour were ringing in his ears—the "*Follow me*"—which was henceforth to be his motto for all time? Yet where would we discover, in reading the account in Matthew, that the narrator of the event was the veritable Publican at the Port of Gennesaret? He gives it no undue prominence. His passing reference to it is to exalt not himself, but Him who is "the chief among ten thousand." The selfish man, in rearing this monument to be read by future ages, would have done his utmost to magnify his own deeds, exalt his own sacrifices, and hide the dark blemishes in his previous life. But, when that inspired monument is reared—on the four sides of which each Evangelist inscribes the record of our Lord's ministry—see how the three others carefully obliterate all memory of

their brother's former life, and seek to give due prominence to his generosity and self-sacrifice—whilst he himself, in giving *his* version of the great Gospel story, puts all his own goodness in the shade; and, as we seek the sculptor's name amid the letters he has chiselled, we find it thus entered amid the glorious company of Apostles—"Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and MATTHEW THE PUBLICAN!"*

III. We have still another instance of sacrifice in the case of Matthew—the sacrifice of a class of feelings that had a more special reference to HIS RELATION TO OTHERS.

When one who has previously led a godless life comes under serious impressions—when the great Gospel change operates on his conscience, and he becomes a *converted* man,—not the smallest part often of the struggle through which he passes, is the ridicule to which he has exposed himself at the hand of his former companions. "I would willingly," is the musing of many, "become religious—live a life of piety and prayer. But what would my associates think of me?—my companions in daily life—my brothers—my kinsmen—my neighbours in the counting-room—my helpmates and coadjutors at the receipt of custom? I could bear anything, and brook anything but these scoffing sneers. I would boldly make the avowal which conscience prompts; but I dare not breast that sweeping current of ridicule which I know too well must needs be encountered."

* See a Discourse on this subject, preached on the occasion of the funeral of the Duke of Wellington, by the Rev. Henry Melvill.

Or, to avoid this, how often do we see the newly awakened and regenerated soul adopting another alternative—(it was the unhappy expedient of Christians of the earlier ages)—rushing from the world into solitude—escaping cold, repulsive, unsympathising looks and words from those with whom they formerly associated, by a morbid abandonment of life's duties and responsibilities.

Now, at first sight, there may be something to admire in the apparent boldness and unworldliness of such resolves. An air of saintliness gathers around these hermit-spirits. They seem to have surrendered much for God and heaven. A spurious sentimental piety would speak of them as living and moving in another atmosphere than ours, and forbid us lightly to violate the sanctity of their religious seclusion.

> "Those hermits blest and holy maids,
> The nearest heaven on earth
> Who talk with God in shadowy glades,
> Free from rude care and mirth;
> To whom some viewless teacher brings
> The secret love of rural things,
> The moral of each fleeting cloud and gale,
> The whispers from above that haunt the twilight Vale."
>
> KEBLE.

But, say as we will, this is the *romance* of religious life—not its reality. Far nobler—far more self-sacrificing—is the conduct of the man, who, like Matthew, after forming his resolution to leave all and follow a despised Master, will congregate together at a great Feast his old companions—his fellows in trade—his former confederates in fraud—and disclosing to them boldly his own change of principles, seek to make them partakers of the same liberty with which he himself has been made free. We believe if Matthew had

now acted as his own natural feelings would have dictated, he would have shut himself up in his dwelling, shunned his former associates, and waited anxiously for the next Passover, that he might follow his Lord to Jerusalem, and leave Galilee and Capernaum for ever! But, with conduct worthy of a hero, he will not leave his post—he will not leave his city, until he takes a graceful method of bidding his acquaintances farewell, and of giving them an opportunity of hearing from the lips of his Lord those words which had spoken peace and joy to his own soul!

Yes, there *was* sacrifice here—the bold sacrifice of a man fearless of all misconstructions. If he had been the slave of the dread of these, he might have thought to himself—"Will not this fatally damage me in the eyes of my future companions?—will not Christ and his disciples, if they see me in such company, denounce me as worldly and inconsistent? Will they not say, That man pretends to be one of us—pretends to have made great sacrifices and renunciations, but his soul is clinging to the dust as before? He seemed to have forsaken all—but his house and halls are open, as ever they were, to the unworthy and depraved."

He heeded not such possible insinuations. He felt, ere he quitted the city of his birth or his sojourn, that he owed a great duty to those who had been for years his friends and intimates. He was in future to be honoured as an Apostle in carrying the Gospel-message to distant tribes; but, in the true spirit of Christianity, he will first begin at home. All unkindred and uncongenial though they *now* be in sentiment and feeling, he will leaven his old associates at Capernaum, before he goes forth, either by pen or voice, to

evangelise the world. He was acting up to the injunction our Blessed Lord gave subsequently to another Apostle—"*When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*"

Are there any of us who, like Matthew, have been brought out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel? Have we still some old companions at our "receipt of custom," those with whom we have been long brought into contact, but who are still without God?—perhaps associates in our former guilt, ruined by our former example. We owe them a heavy debt of Christian love! It becomes us to strive to do what best we can, while we have opportunity, for their souls' salvation. It may be a hard matter; it may need a bold heart to do it; but what might not many a young man, many a youthful soldier of the cross, effect, with the glory of God as the great aim of his life; how much might he not effect at his place of business on those seated with him at the same desk, or standing behind the same counter, or plying the same worldly calling,—teaching them to sanctify and hallow their worldly work with great religious motives, and to interweave diligence in business with fervency of spirit, "serving the Lord!"

IV. The last illustration of the Spirit of *sacrifice* on the part of Matthew (though not, of course, specified in any of the passages which head this chapter) was THE SACRIFICE OF LIFE.

We know little of the future of this Apostle, but what we do know, is all in accordance with the antecedents on which we have now been commenting. After spending eight years in Judea, during which time his memorable Gospel was written, he went (according to the statements of early eccle-

siastical writers) on his apostolic mission and labours to Africa. Through him Ethiopia first "stretched out her hands unto God." But on that virgin soil too, the blood of this faithful Galilean was spilt—by a violent death for his blessed Master's sake, he set the most impressive of seals to his sincerity. The World, Self, Friends, Home, Country, and now *Life* itself, were freely surrendered at the bidding of his great Lord.

From first to last, indeed, his was a noble specimen of an entire and unqualified *sacrifice*. The other disciples seem, after entering on the apostleship, still to have retained their boats and nets. We still meet Peter and John, Andrew and James, as Fishermen on the Sea of Tiberias; but Matthew we never find again at his former calling. If we visit in thought the port of Capernaum, a new Collector is seated at the Booth of impost—a new tenant occupies the scene of the strange farewell feast. The Fishermen could go back with safety and impunity to their daily occupation, for it was a lawful one—rid of all temptation to fraud and unworthy dealing. But it was different with the Publican. Return to the old resort might have been perilous. The old fires of covetousness might have been rekindled; drawn within the perilous vortex he might have made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, and proved another Demas loving the present world and forsaking Christ. He seems purposely to shun Galilee; and even when the other disciples return to it for a season, he cleaves to his adopted home in Judea. After the Saviour's resurrection we have the names of the apostolic band enumerated only twice; on the first occasion, when Jesus met

them on the shores of Gennesaret—*the name of Matthew is* NOT *there;* on the second, when they are gathered in "the upper room" in Jerusalem—*Matthew* IS *mentioned!* His voice is heard with the rest, engaged in earnest prayer for the coming of the Paraclete—"following" his Lord in thought to the glory to which He had ascended, and waiting for the promised baptism of fire. That Holy Spirit, in accordance with the Saviour's word, is poured abundantly on Matthew, to qualify him alike to be an inspired Historian and a faithful Missionary. As the *Historian*—He "guides him into all the truth," "brings all things to his remembrance," "shews him things to come." As the *Missionary*—He imbues him with supernatural gifts, in accordance with his Lord's parting declaration—"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth!" Forth he went, on his great errand; ending A LIFE OF SACRIFICE on a martyr's cross, and inheriting, we doubt not, a martyr's crown.

In conclusion, Christ would speak to each of us in the words he addressed to this Publican—"FOLLOW THOU ME!" Believers! He asks you to honour Him in your daily callings—in your everyday words and works. If, like the other fishermen-disciples, you are engaged in lawful occupations, leave them not, but ennoble and sanctify them with high Christian motives; and, as you reap in worldly gains, forget not the God who is the Proprietor of your wealth, and looks to you to be the almoners of His bounty.

If, like the Publican at the Roman toll, yours is debate-

able ground—where principle is at stake;—some desperate game at which conscience holds the dice with trembling hand;—like Matthew *forsake it.* Leave it, and leave it for ever; and take as your motto (with the Divine favour and blessing)—"*The little that a just man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.*"

Oh! plead not your worldly duties, your business, your engagements, as an apology for living without God; as if the voice of Christ cannot find you there, and His grace cannot triumph over all obstacles. Remember it was amid the coarse jostlings of that crowd at the port of Capernaum—amid the shouts of bargemen—the ringing of hammers—the roll of waggons—that Matthew first heard (ay, and listened to) the call "*Follow me!*"

One other thought still suggests itself. We have spoken of St Matthew's life as a lowly yet splendid instance of *Self-sacrifice;* and yet, I would beg you to mark that, in the very midst of that Sacrifice there is an element of CHEERFULNESS. It is a striking thing to note, at the very moment when he has made renunciation of his worldly ALL,—when his old associates and acquaintances are doubtless speaking of him as a *ruined* man,—the old publican makes a *Feast*—a *joyous Banquet!* He is cheerful, at the very moment when he must have been conscious that the world, by a voluntary act, was receding from his grasp, and that *his,* henceforth, is to be a homelier meal, a humbler abode, a more despised master than the Roman Cæsar!

But this is a true Picture of Christianity, and of the power of true Christianity on every heart. Religion is a *Feast*—Religion is *gladness.* Let others paint it, if they will, draped

in sackcloth, with melancholy on the brow and a bunch of funereal cypress in the hand. *That* is a spurious religion; not the Religion of this Saviour-God who sat with Matthew at his feast—honoured him with His presence at this social gathering! Never did the soul of Matthew find true joy till *now*. He had it not before, in his bags of gold—his lordly bribes—his cursed robberies. But he had it now in "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" "*keeping* his heart;" and even when he left that table, and bade farewell for ever to a luxurious home, he could look up to the face of his Great Master and say, "*Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.*"

If God be calling upon us to follow Him, and if that following demands the surrender of much that our hearts may fondly cling to,—whether it be the world or self, or friends, or children, or home, or substance,—at *His* bidding let us do it willingly—"The Lord loveth a cheerful giver." The very surrendering, if it be for His glory, will have an accompanying blessedness. Oh! I repeat, what *can* we surrender for *Him* to be compared for a moment with what *He* surrendered for *us?*—"GOD SPARED NOT HIS OWN SON!" What sacrifice can we count great, or unreasonable, or grievous, after *this!* Thus, being willing to honour Him as the *Taker* as well as the *Giver*, let us remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "*There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive manifold more in this present time; and in the world to come life everlasting.*"

XIV.

The Miraculous Feast.

The Paschal moon above
Seems like a Saint to rove,
Left shining in the world with Christ alone;
Below the Lake's still face
Sleeps sweetly in th' embrace
Of mountains terraced high with mossy stone.

Here we may sit and dream
Over the heavenly theme,
Till to our soul the former days return;
Till on the grassy bed,
Where thousands once He fed,
The world's incarnate Maker we discern.

"And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and, looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full."—MATT. xiv. 19, 20; MARK vi. 39–43; LUKE ix. 14–17; JOHN vi. 10–13.

THE MIRACULOUS FEAST.

THE miracle, which is to form the subject of this chapter, seems to have had an important influence on the Jewish mind, in substantiating the claims of Jesus to be the Son of God and the Messiah promised to the Fathers. We cannot wonder, therefore, that it occupies a prominent place in Gospel story. It is worthy of note that the miracle itself —the feeding of the five thousand—is described by all the four Evangelists. Even John, who seldom travels in his inspired narrative beyond the events transacted in Judea, on the present occasion inserts this remarkable *Galilean* incident, in connexion with the sublime discourse to which it gave rise on *the Bread of life*.

Before referring to the *locality* of the miracle, it may be well to advert to the two causes which seem to have induced our blessed Lord and His disciples to suspend, for a time, their labours on the busy western shore of GENNESARET, and seek the seclusion and repose of the opposite side.

The *first* appears, from St Mark, to have been the untimely death of John the Baptist, whose imprisonment in the castle of Macherus on the Dead Sea, had just been terminated by an act of capricious and cold-blooded cruelty on the part of Herod. A sorrowing group of his bereaved disciples seem to have hastened, whenever the deed was consummated, (or rather after the interment of their master's mangled remains,)

to inform a mightier than John of the mournful tragedy. He who afterwards wept tears of anguish over the grave of Lazarus, was not likely to be unmoved when the tidings reached Him of His greatest prophet—a true "Master in Israel"—having fallen.

We have here a glimpse of the *tenderness* of the soul of Jesus. Sorrow at the death of a valued friend and follower, whose holy life had shone with undimmed lustre to its close, stirred the depths of His loving heart. Grief likes to be alone. The great world, with its din and bustle, is strange—grating—ungenial at such an hour. Jesus, *feeling as a man*, would seek to leave for a little the crowd—to commune with His own heart and be still. Related alike by kindred and affection to the Messenger of the Covenant, He summons His disciples to take ship from Capernaum and make for the farther shore, that there they might mingle their tears and lamentations over the hero-heart that had so suddenly ceased to beat. John was the Forerunner of his Lord. "He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light"—the morning star heralding the dawn of Gospel day! When that Star was quenched in the firmament, the Great Sun of all Being mourned the sudden extinction of His brightest satellite, and for the moment waded through clouds of sorrow. As the "Friend of the Bridegroom," the Baptist had "rejoiced greatly at the sound of the Bridegroom's voice;" now the Bridegroom in His turn mourns when the voice of His faithful, earnest, self-denying friend is for ever hushed and silenced.

But a *second* cause may be added for this retirement to the solitudes of Naphtali. We find, in the preceding context.

that the twelve Apostles had just returned from their first missionary tour in the towns and villages of Galilee—the first-fruits and earnest of vaster enterprises throughout Judea and the world. Weak and exhausted with their incessant ministrations, their Lord provides for them this season of needful rest. "Come ye also," says he, "apart into a desert place, and *rest* a little." It was a befitting opportunity, too, for communicating in private to their Divine Master the results of their preaching. "*The apostles,*" we read, "*gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had* DONE *and what they had* TAUGHT*!*"

Solemn and touching picture! Ah! it is what every minister of the Gospel has yet to do—when his work is done—when his mission is over—and he crosses to meet his Lord in the deep solitudes of eternity. What an incentive this for every Steward of the mysteries of grace to be earnest, faithful, self-denying, instant in season and out of season—"warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." How terrible to confront his Judge at last, and to be branded by his own deeds and his own teachings as a traitor to his trust; listening, in the silence of self-condemnation, to the two-fold question which will be put at the threshold of immortality—"*What hast thou* DONE? What hast thou TAUGHT?"

The place to which the Redeemer and His disciples now retired was in the neighbourhood of *Bethsaida* or *Julias*, on the north-eastern shore of Gennesaret, under the green mountains of Golan, where the Jordan hurries its waters into the Lake.

We are not to understand by "a desert place" a region

of dry barren sand; on the contrary, it was a spot fertile in itself, but it had not, like the opposite land of GENNESARET, been brought under the cultivation of the husbandman. It remained in a state of nature. Cattle browsed on its slopes, or on the rich pastures at the mouth of the Jordan. It was now the most delightful season of the Palestine year. The first flush of spring was carpeting both plain and mountain with living green. John specially notes the season: "The passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh;"* and, again, as confirmatory of the time, *Mark* (who is ever the most graphic and pictorial of the Evangelists,—always seizing, if I might so say, with a painter's eye, some striking natural feature in the scene he delineates), afterwards represents the multitudes, in his description of the miracle, as seated on the "GREEN grass." †

The Lord and His disciples had crossed alone in their fishing vessel, but the many eager auditors they had left behind—still thirsting for the word of the kingdom—set out on foot, walking round by the northern shore of the lake, in hopes of meeting Jesus as he landed, and of again enjoying His instructions. The fame of the Prophet of Galilee had now rapidly spread. As these anxious groups passed through

* John vi. 4.

† "The desert place was either one of the green table lands, visible from the hills on the western side; or, more probably, part of the rich plain at the mouth of the Jordan. In the parts of this plain not cultivated by the hand of man, would be found the 'much green grass' still fresh in the spring of the year, when this event occurred, before it had faded away in the summer sun—the tall grass which, broken down by the feet of the thousands there gathered together, would make as it were couches for them to recline upon. Overhanging the plain was 'the mountain' range of Golan, on whose heights 'Jesus sat with his disciples,' and saw the multitude coming to them; and to which, when the feast was over, he again retired."—*Stanley*, p. 377.

the towns and hamlets that lined the shore, they added to their numbers,—villagers, husbandmen, fishermen swelled their company. Moreover, the time of the Passover approaching, it is more than probable they would meet some of the northern caravans of pilgrims coming to the holy feast. The report of the miracles performed in the towns bordering on *Tiberias*, had reached the adjacent region—Tyre and Sidon—the secluded hamlets of Lebanon and the cities of Syria; and many, hearing that the wonder-working Teacher was so nigh at hand, would doubtless willingly suspend their journey, and join the groups who were hastening to meet Him.

The crowd which had left, a few hours before, the streets of Capernaum, has now increased with these varied recruits to the number of five thousand. Might it not be taken as the first earnest of a vaster fulfilment of old Jacob's prophecy regarding the coming of the Shiloh—"*Unto him shall the gathering of the people be?*"

From one of these green slopes, already indicated, Jesus sees the multitudes. The flocks browsing on the pastoral scenes around Him are carefully tended; but the Great and Good Shepherd is "moved with compassion" towards the human crowd below, because "they were as sheep *not* having a shepherd!" He prepares, therefore, to lead them to green pastures and still waters, and to give them meat to eat which the world knows not of.

Let us here note, the ever unselfish, untiring, unwearying ardour of the Saviour in His great mission of mercy. Could we have wondered, if, in the present instance, He had declined to leave repose so needed?—all the more needed, as He knew that, with the Passover drawing near, there would be fresh

claims on His own teaching, and on that of his disciples. How hard, it seems, to break that rest, (that well-earned recompense), after weeks of unremitting toil, and days in which they had scarce leisure or opportunity to taste food! Could we have thought it strange if Jesus had rebuked this rude disturbance—this unkind intrusion on sorrow and repose—and left the motley throng to return, as best they might, to their places of sojourn? But never in any one instance do we find Him sacrificing the comforts of others to minister to His own. "Christ *pleased not himself.*" It was the motto of His whole earthly existence. The deeps of His being are stirred by the sight of these unshepherded, unfolded sheep; and He hastens down the mountain slope to minister alike to their spiritual and temporal necessities. In a few moments that same majestic voice is heard in the deep stillness of this mountain solitude, with the roll of Jordan at their side, and the blue heavens for their canopy, proclaiming words which cause many in that "wilderness and solitary place" to be "made glad."

Before performing His work of omnipotence, Jesus seemed desirous of testing the faith of His own disciples, and especially of one, from whom, after many weeks of close fellowship and communion, we might well have expected a more prompt recognition of the power of his Master. "*When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto* PHILIP, *Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little*"*

* John vi. 5-7.

Philip, of all the Apostles, seems to have been "*slow of heart.*" He gave promise, at an earlier period, of better things—when, with a soul apparently full of zeal and confidence, he sped him to Nathanael with the good news that Messiah had at last been found; and when he would not leave the guileless Israelite until, from under the shade of his fig tree, he had "brought him to Jesus." The mingled gentleness and severity of the Saviour's rebuke, addressed to Philip, on an after occasion, might have been administered now—"*Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?*" Jesus had put the present question, "*Whence shall we buy bread?*" to see whether or not he would leap at once to the conclusion, warranted by all which, during the preceding weeks, his eyes had seen and his ears had heard of the Word of life. He had witnessed the tempest stilled—devils cast out—the possessed sitting calm at their Deliverer's feet;—he had seen Sickness, at the same mandate, taking wings and fleeing away—and, above all, Death itself compelled to yield its prey;—and yet, in dull, stupid unbelief, he begins to make the poor calculation about his two hundred pennyworth of bread! Others, less privileged, might have conveyed to him a silent reprimand. Had the Leper of Capernaum—or the friends of the Paralytic—or Jairus—or the Gentile centurion—had one or other of these listened to the Saviour's question, the likelihood is, that from each and all there would have been the reply—"Thou who changest the storm into a calm—Thou who hast the elements of nature and the events of providence in Thy hand—Thou who hast the key of heaven's garner at Thy girdle—

Thou hast only to speak the word, and manna will distil, as aforetime, from the clouds, or the fowls of the air will fetch, as they did to Elijah of old, a mysterious supply. What is this fainting crowd in this remote corner to *Thee*, 'who openest Thine hand and satisfiest the desire of EVERY living thing?'"

Let us beware of dishonouring God by our unbelief, descending to earthly shifts and earthly calculations instead of honouring Him by a full and implicit reliance in His mingled power and mercy;—His ability and willingness to help—feed—sustain—comfort us. "Can God spread a table in the wilderness?" was the challenge which unbelief once uttered. The reply was, a forty years' experience of unvarying and unfailing faithfulness and love. "Man's extremity" is often "God's opportunity." He suffers our circumstances to be at the lowest, that He may render more signal His interposing mercy and grace. Remember, "what things are impossible with men are possible with God." Nay, "all things are possible to him that believeth." "Cast then thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee," "*Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily, thou shalt be fed.*"

One of the disciples is apparently either more disinterested than the rest, or possibly he may be spokesman for the others: "*Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many?*" This, from the narrative of the other Evangelists, seems to have formed their own supply of provisions—the little stock which they had provided before crossing the lake—for their own evening meal.

After the previous days of exhaustion and want, to which we have already referred, this homely fare could ill have been spared; and had Andrew or his brother Apostles been men of selfish natures, they would have taken care not to make known the existence of their tiny store. But, as we found in the case of Matthew, it is the Gospel's great triumph to displace SELF, and on its ruins upraise the two great master principles of love to God and love to man.

Let us learn the lesson here, of a kindly interest in others, —a willingness to deny *ourselves*, if we can confer a benefit on our fellows. He is unworthy of the name of Christian, whose every thought begins, centres, and terminates in self— a cold, frigid icicle, chilling all who come within his reach; *when* he gives, giving grudgingly; and *what* he gives, costing him no sacrifice. Sacrifice of some sort, either of substance, or time, or personal effort, is necessarily involved in every deed of true beneficence. It was not the gifts of costly munificence, thrown with supercilious air into the Treasury, which the Saviour valued; but the widow's two mites, the little earnings which a grateful, giving heart doled out of her penury, and which made that evening's meal homelier and scantier than otherwise it would have been.

Let us go back in thought to that rural scene on the Jordan, and as we behold the disciples hastening to their Lord with their handful of barley loaves and fishes, at His feet, for distribution to the fainting multitude,—let us learn anew, the lesson of self-sacrifice. That scene is a miniature picture of the world, with its thousands (ay, its millions!) of starving outcasts; famishing, body and soul, in temporal

and spiritual destitution. *Have* we, like the disciples, abridged our own comforts to minister to *theirs;* or rather, is it not the duty of each to ask, before God, What *can* I abridge? Is there no needless expenditure—no lavish waste —no foolish redundancy—nothing that could be spared in my house or my table, in my social feasts, that, instead of going to feed and pamper that love of extravagance which is running wild in all modern society, would tend to dry the widow's tears, clothe the nakedness and feed the mouths of the orphan and destitute? Not that the elegancies and refinements of life are to be condemned and denounced. Far from it! As "creatures of God" they are *good*, and if kept in due subordination, not to be refused, but rather "received with thanksgiving." But they *are* to be condemned, if they are either abused, or if their very lavish profusion only hardens into a deeper and intenser selfishness, and a more guilty ignoring of the wants and claims of others. We shall find immediately a command given, with regard to the fragments of the feast, that they were to be carefully gathered, so as to allow of no wastefulness.

Ah! might not the crumbs, often despised among us, go to gladden the lot of some lowly Lazarus at our gate? might not the delicacies at many a board be spared, or abridged, to swell the widow's barrel of meal? might not some lights of luxury go far to feed her cruse of oil? Remember the Apostle's words, "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Remember the words of a Greater than the Apostle—that adorable Saviour, who, on the Great Day will reckon what is

done to the least and poorest of His brethren, as if done to Himself—"*I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink.*" In doing it to yonder shivering outcast, yonder ragged beggar, yonder old man groping in his blindness, yonder widow with her homeless orphans, yonder idolater abroad, yonder heathen at home—"*Verily I say unto you, ye did it unto* ME."

But, to return to the miracle It is supposed when Jesus first put the question we have already considered to Philip, it had been towards the afternoon. But as the day wears fast away, and twilight approaches, his disciples come to Him in great concern, urging the necessity of dismissing the crowd to the adjoining villages, that they might procure needed victuals and lodging for the night. The Lord proceeds without delay, to manifest His power by the prodigy which follows: "*He commanded them,*" says Mark, "*to make all sit down by companies on the green grass; and they sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties.*"

We may imagine the scene;—Groups of men gathered in regular order; their long-drawn shadows at that sunset hour projected on "the green grass," or creeping up the gentle slopes. In front, facing these haggard countenances, with the traces of grief and exhaustion on His own, stands the Son of God! He is about to fulfil the truth of a saying uttered from a mountain platform then full in view, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and *all these things shall be added unto you.*" These fainting thousands (many of them at least), had sought the Kingdom of God, and now they were to have the promised addition of temporal blessings.

The feast proceeds;—the food increases and multiplies in the hand of Christ—still more, in that of the Apostles, as they deal it out to the crowds—and more still, as the separate groups receive their allotted portion. At last, when all are satisfied, the disciples receive the closing command, "*Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost: and they took up of the fragments which remained twelve baskets full.*" The residue of the feast was greater than the amount of the original provisions.

Oh! beautiful type of true benevolence, and its invariable results. The Apostles had given their little all with an ungrudging spirit,—but they were no losers. The loaves expanded in the hands of Giver and receiver; and when the donors came to count their loss, lo, it was a mysterious gain! "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself."

But there were weightier spiritual truths intended to be conveyed in this miraculous feast. The *Miracle* for a moment lapses into the *Parable*. Great and glorious truths in an acted *Parable-form* are impressed by their Master on the apostolic band. These, as we have seen, had just returned from their first mission. He tells them still, in His name, and on his authority, to proceed on their Godlike work. That crowd was symbolic of a world, fainting, wearying, hungering, for the Bread of life,—and the command to the disciples is, "GIVE YE THEM TO EAT." Nor were the overflowing baskets without their significancy;—did they not point to the inexhaustible affluence and fulness of the Divine riches?—that

thousands on thousands have been ministered to, and yet still the table in the wilderness is as full as ever? Millions of hungry souls have been fed, and still the promise is as ample as ever, "*He satisfieth the longing soul with good things;*" "*Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.*" Still the command is to His servants, "*Give ye them to eat*"—Proclaim, "He that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Nay, there is more than this implied;—in these overflowing baskets of fragments, God seems to say to his servants, "I will multiply my blessing, the more the bread is given, the more the word is proclaimed. There will not only be "*bread enough,*" but "*to spare.*" I will give "more exceeding abundantly above all that you can ask or think."

While all this is encouraging to ministers, who are the distributors of the bread; those who receive it at their hands may read in this Parabolic miracle the willingness of Christ to supply the wants of all His people in this desert world. They never can come out of place, or out of season, to Him. As we see the Saviour coming forth from His needed solitude and rest, to minister to these wearied multitudes, does He not proclaim to all time, to fainting myriads, who, in future ages would have far deeper cause of weariness and unrest, "*Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.*"

And now, let us "gather up the fragments which remain, that nothing be lost;"—or rather let us, from the Saviour's own discourse the day following, carry away the ONE great Fragment—His own sublime spiritual lesson supplied by the

miracle—it is the key-note of that wondrous Sermon:—"*Labour not for the bread which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life.*"

LABOUR NOT FOR THE PERISHABLE!—What lesson more needed, when with multitudes the *perishable* seems all they live for—all they care for? Yes, indeed. Sad it is, when we come in sober seriousness to pause and think of it, that so many thousands should be frittering away this great period of preparation for eternity in this *unremunerative* labour of earth.—*Unremunerative!* for what in a few brief years will all this worldly toil come to? All that the world can give, apart from Christ, never *can*, never *will*, satisfy. You may as well, by a few grains of sand, or a few spadefulls of dust, expect to fill up a yawning gulph, as fill the gaping crevices of man's soul—reach the deeps of his being with the poor nothings of earth. He was born for nobler things, and with *less* noble things you cannot satisfy him.

Besides all this, how transient, uncertain, precarious, all that wealth can hoard, and labour realise! Like Sisyphus of old, the stone, after a lifetime's labour, has been heaved to the mountain-summit; but in one unwary moment, it slips from the hand, *down* it hurries, with hopeless bound, to the depths of the valley; the golden heap which took a life-time to amass, one solitary wave of calamity comes and washes away!

BUT, "*he that believeth on* ME *shall* NEVER *hunger.*" His inordinate appetite for earthly things shall be so subdued and vanquished by the nobler portion he has in *Myself*, that he will neither too ardently covet earthly blessings, nor fret and mourn too heavily when they are taken away.

Let us listen to the voice of Him who is even now saying to us, "I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE!" Let the voice of that same yearning Shepherd, who was moved with compassion towards the wandering multitude—let the voice of Jesus be heard telling every weary "labourer" of that rest He has procured. Let the monitory word follow us out into this busy world; let its accents fall in the place of business, in the crowded mart, in the workshop, by the counter, in the class-room, in the study—let it follow us up the ladder of ambition, and track our steps in the race for riches—"LABOUR NOT FOR THE MEAT WHICH PERISHETH, BUT FOR THAT WHICH ENDURETH TO EVERLASTING LIFE!"

XV.

The Night Rescue.

On the dark wave of Galilee
The gloom of twilight gathers fast,
And o'er the waters heavily
Sweeps, cold and drear, the evening blast.

The weary bird has left the air,
And sunk into its shelter'd nest;
The wandering beast has sought his lair,
And laid him down to welcome rest.

Still near the lake, with weary tread,
Loiters a form of human kind;
And from his lone unsheltered head
Flows the chill night-damp on the wind.

Why seeks not he a home of rest?
Why seeks not he the pillow'd bed?
Beasts have their dens, and birds their nest,
He hath not where to lay his head.

"And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray. and when the evening was come he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid."—Matt. xiv. 22–27.

THE NIGHT RESCUE.

IT is NIGHT on the SEA OF GALILEE! a night of Tempest;—the Lord of the sea and the storm walks majestically on the waves. "*He made darkness his secret place—his pavilion round about him are dark waters and thick clouds of the sky.*" We know of no subject in the inspired picture-gallery which exceeds this in sublimity and grandeur. If there be poetry in any part of the Gospel story, it is here. It forms an episode in a Life which itself was the grandest and sublimest of *Epics*. Let us approach the scene with sanctified imaginations; and as we contemplate the Creator of all worlds—His head wreathed with tempests—the restless surge his pathway, approaching the labouring vessel of the Apostle-fishermen, and revealing himself as their God and guide—be it ours with triumphant faith to exclaim, "*This* GOD is *our God* for ever and ever, He will be OUR guide even unto death."

The miraculous feast to the crowd of five thousand being over, Jesus dispersed the multitudes to their several abodes. As the night-shadows were falling, they might be seen in straggling groups wending their way round the northern shore to their various hamlet-homes. We can think of the Passover pilgrims, too, accompanying them—their voices attuned to some of those psalms and sacred songs they were in the habit of singing by night on the occasion of this solemn anniversary! Would not the melody be all the sweeter on account

of the gracious words they had heard proceeding, a few hours before, from the lips of the wonder-working Prophet, whom the entire crowd, John tells us, had He permitted, were ready to hail at that moment as their Messiah-King—"the hope of Israel and the Saviour thereof?"

Before dismissing the multitude, however, He gives directions to His disciples to enter their vessel and recross the lake to Bethsaida. He gives no indication as to how or where He may rejoin them—whether He will follow next morning in the steps of the crowd, and meet them in the streets, or at the port of Capernaum—or whether He will avail himself of some other vessel crossing the lake at early dawn. On all this He maintains a mysterious silence.

From the words "*He constrained* them to get into the ship,"* we may almost gather that it was with fond reluctance the disciples assented to this separation. They may have attempted even a gentle remonstrance, pleading either that He would still accompany them, or else permit them again to drop anchor, and suspend their voyage till He was prepared to go. The sky may have already been wearing a threatening aspect;—the hollow moanings familiar to the fishermen's ears may have been premonitory of a coming storm;—lowering clouds may have been wreathing the brow of the Gadara-heights and the headlands of Tiberias.

On a former occasion (which we have already considered) when the disciples encountered another storm on the lake, they felt that all was safe when their Master had said, "*Let* US *pass over.*" Their adorable Lord—the Heavenly Pilot—was with them in the vessel. Now it was different. They

* Matt. xiv. 22.

had before them *night*, on a tempestuous sea ; and He, whose voice alone could hush its fury, was leaving them to brave it *alone !*

But His word and will were paramount. That great Lord, whose power and tenderness were so recently manifested to the fainting multitudes, *commands* them to depart. It is enough ; they ask no more. Though the storm may have been already beating high—like brave soldiers, who, at the bidding of their Captain, rush on to the assault, determined to conquer or perish—they are in a moment launched on the deep, encountering the crested waves and the gathering darkness.

It was twilight (about six o'clock) when they set out. A fair breeze would soon have run them to the western side ; but when midnight came, it found them little more than half way on their voyage. Owing to a furious headwind, their sail was useless ; and though for nine hours they toiled manfully at the oars, three o'clock (the fourth watch of the night) found them still pitching in the midst of that roaring sea—the fitful lights (their only compass) glimmering distant as ever on the longed-for opposite shore. The former cry of faithless unbelief may now have been often on their lips as they thought of last evening's mysterious parting, "Master, master, carest *Thou* not that *we* perish ?" "If *He* had been with us," we may picture them saying to each other, "If *He* had been with us, asleep as He was before, in the hinder part of our ship, then we could have rushed to His side, invoked His aid, and, in a moment would the storm have been changed into a calm. But *where* He is now, we cannot tell ; our cries are inaudible, our prayers are vain ; they are

drowned in the rage of that tempest." "*Surely our way is hid from the Lord, and our judgment is passed over from our God!*"

Let us pause here and learn a twofold lesson.

Viewing this scene as a picture of human life, learn, first, *How sudden are the transitions in human experience, from sunshine to storm, and from storm to sunshine.*

A few hours before, the disciples had been dealing out the miraculous stores to the joyous groups on the green grass, partaking along with them of this mountain Feast—the Great Shepherd of Israel Himself tending them with loving interest. Never did sun seem to go down more happily, or promise a more auspicious rising. But now the sky is clouded—night has drawn its curtains gloomily around them—and, worse than all, the Lord of the Feast is gone. The Shepherd has left, and the sheep are scattered like broken reeds on the trough of the sea.

Let us not calculate too fondly or confidently on the permanency of any earthly good. Let us be "glad" of our gourds, but not "exceeding glad." When we may be saying, "Peace, peace, sudden destruction may come." To-day God may be spreading for us a table in the wilderness; prodigal nature may be pouring her richest gifts into our lap;—at evening! the sun of our earthly joys may go down in thick darkness, and the memory of our best blessings be all that remains.

Learn, as a second lesson, that *God often sends trials to His own people, from which the world are exempt.*

Who are these we here behold, tossed on that sea? Jesus had sent the multitudes quietly and peacefully away; no storm burst on *them;* no danger threatened *them;* no fear disquieted *them.* Of all the thousands who had a few hours before listened to His voice, His own beloved followers alone were called to contend with the tempest.

And it is often so still, with Christ's people; often do storms visit them, from which the world are free; oftimes, when the world are in sunshine, are they in darkness. The bands of ransomed voyagers, now lining the heavenly shore, give their united testimony—"We are they who have come out of great tribulation."

But God has always some wise end in view in sending His people into such a sea of troubles. In the case of the disciples, it was evidently to discipline their faith, and to prepare them for sterner moral storms, yet in reserve for them. That night at Tiberias would imprint on their inmost souls truths and lessons which never would be effaced in all their future apostleship, and serve to brace their spirits for many an hour of perplexity and danger.

It is worthy of note, too, the *progression* in these trials of faith.* The severity of the test is increased as the spiritual life advances. Just as a child is by degrees, step by step, taught to walk, so are these disciples tutored in the higher walk of faith. The previous storm had doubtless the same end in view (the testing and strengthening of this great principle), but there was on *that* occasion a gracious tempering of the wind by the Good Shepherd to His little flock—His shorn lambs. When the tempest then burst around them, He

* Chrysostom, quoted by Trench, *in loco.*

was at their side, though fast asleep on a pillow; yet the very fact of His presence must have calmed fears that might otherwise have overmastered them. But they are to graduate still higher in the school of faith. A severer test, therefore, now comes. On the former occasion, Jesus was like the mother seated by her infant's cradle, rocking it asleep with the tones of her well-known voice, or dispelling its fears by imprinting, with her own lips, kisses on its brow. Now, with the increase of spiritual and apostolic experience, He would subject them to a severer ordeal—a further step in His gradual process of discipline. And how does He do so? It is in the very way that same mother disciplines her babe, at a more advanced period of its infancy, when teaching it to walk. She places it by itself on the opposite side of the room, to let it feel that it is alone. The little learner, conscious that it is left to its own resources, and that even at the peril of a fall it must risk the tiny adventure, with outstretched hands makes its way across the floor to bury its head in that bosom of safety, and clings there more closely and tenderly than ever! * It is not the tender vine, supported by its trelliswork, which is the type of strength, but the oak of a hundred years, standing alone on the mountain height, wrestling with the storm—the very buffetings of the blast only making it moor its roots firmer and deeper in its ancestral soil.

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, but rejoice." "*If need be*, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith being much

* See this well illustrated in Cheever's "*Waymarks of the Pilgrimage*," p. 25.

more precious than of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

But to return to the narrative. As the disciples' dangers increase, so also do their fears. Sadder and stranger than ever seems their Master's absence. "Where is now our God?" mingles in thought, oft and again, with the wild accents of the storm. It is unlike His kind heart thus to have deserted us, and consigned us to the mercy of this pitiless tempest.

But where in reality was their beloved Saviour in the hour they most needed His presence, and most ardently longed for it? He *seemed* to have hid His face from them, but it was in appearance only, not in reality. Up on the heights of one of these mountains that girdled the north-east corner of the lake, the Redeemer of the world, in the silence of midnight, is alone with His God! That mountain summit is converted into an altar of Prayer. His eye is at one moment on the distant sea, at another uplifted to heaven; the breathings of His soul are ascending in behalf of His disciples; He is watching every billow that breaks on their tempest-tossed bark, every fear which disturbs their fainting hearts. The darkness cannot hide them from Him; their troubled thoughts "He knoweth afar off." Though not praying *with* them, He is praying FOR them, that "their faith fail not."

Oftimes are the people of God tempted with repining Zion to say, "*My Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me.*" But what saith Zion's God, "*Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compas-*

sion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee!" Storms and tumults may be raging without—temptations may be assailing within; besetting sins may now be disturbing the serenity of our spiritual joys; seasons of holy refreshment and peace may be gone; God may seem to be hiding His face, and we are troubled. But behind these temporary clouds there sits a Saviour of unchanging faithfulness, who, though we may have forgotten *Him*, has not forgotten *us*. Yes! precious assurance! at the very moment when we may be thinking all to be lost;—the vessel which bears in it our eternal destinies about to be foundered;—when faith is beginning to fail, and hope to sink—all dark without, all trouble within;—and worse than all, when our heavenly Pilot seems to have deserted us—*there is above* A PRAYING SAVIOUR! He who watched the disciples' agitated vessel, from Galilee's mountain, and converted its lonely summit into a place of prayer, is now seated a great Intercessor on Mount Zion above, directing the roll of every billow that threatens His people's peace, and, though to them unseen, "praying that their faith fail not!"

And as it was with the disciples of old, He will not *always* deny His people the sensible comforts of His grace and presence. Generally in the darkest hour of their trial, when they least look for Him, and least expect Him, He reveals Himself. Coming, too, in the very pathway of their troubles; going "through the flood on foot," and causing them "THERE" (in the very place and experience of tumultuous sorrow)—causing them *there* to "rejoice in Him!"

BUT, alas! in the narrative before us, we have a mournful testimony, how sad often is the contrast between the faithful-

ness of a Saviour God, and the faithlessness and unbelief of *man*.

Jesus comes! walking majestically with His radiant form across the troubled waves. He is so near His disciples that they can hold converse with Him. Dark as was the night, they might well have guessed that it was their Lord's *form* as well as *voice* that was upon the waters. The joyous utterance might well have passed "from tongue to tongue" —"The Master has come!" We expect to hear every moment, as He nears the vessel's side, the word of joyous recognition, "*My Lord and my God.*"

But strange! His appearance seems to trouble and agitate them more than that vexed and agitated sea. With those superstitious feelings so proverbially common among sailors and fishermen, they think they descry in the hazy darkness only some unwelcome messenger from the spirit-world—they imagine, possibly, in their dread, either that one of the spirits of darkness, roaming so lately the gorges of Gadara, is now evoked from the depths of the lake where it had plunged with the mountain herd; or else that the hour of their own death and destruction has arrived, and a premonitory herald from the regions of Hades—some terrible shape such as the Jewish fancy was wont to picture —has come from the world of the dead to give them warning, that that yawning sea is preparing their sepulchre, and these moaning night winds chanting their requiem! Faith is for a moment eclipsed by vain superstition. "*They were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.*"

How great the contrast; the heaving waters, the per-

turbed disciples, and the calm majestic tranquillity of the Great Lord!

And is not the experience here described often that of God's people still? When Jesus comes to them on some billowy night of trial—He comes radiant with beauty—His heart full of love—His hands full of blessing. But they can see nothing in the looming mist but a phantom spirit of terror. Their eyes are dimmed with unbelief—the windows of the soul are darkened—they remember God, and are troubled. Or sometimes, it is even a sadder experience, when in the extremity of their unbelief all their former pledges of His faithfulness and loving-kindness seem to vanish, when for the moment the rush of despair comes over them. Religion is a *lie*—its comforts delusions—its fears tales of credulity and terror—its joys brain-phantoms—and the whole pillars of their belief seem to rock and tremble to their base. With others again, even when He *is* recognised, His dealings seem strange. As with the disciples in the text, He comes to their ship, but He makes "as if He would have passed them by." He walks, but it is towards the prow of the vessel. There is a strange delay in His intervention. He hears their cries, but He seems as if He heard them not. The sun is in the heavens, but there is no light in the sky—no break in the clouds.

Be assured there is some wise reason for such postponement—such apparent "passing by." You remember, how strange seemed His delay to the family of Bethany, when He lingered among the mountain-glens of distant Gilead, instead of at once responding to their message and hastening to their relief. But in the end it was all "for the glory of God, that the Son

of God might be glorified thereby, issuing in a glorious proof, that "*the Lord is good to them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.*" You remember in that memorable walk with the two disciples at Emmaus, when He reached the village, "He made" apparently, "as though He would have gone farther." Why? It was, as on the occasion before us, to draw forth the fervid invitation of burning hearts, "*Abide with us, . . . and they constrained Him.*" How often does He thus delay His succouring mercy—postpone deliverance—just in order to draw forth the music of importunate *prayer?*

Yes! not the least memorable lessons in this scene on the midnight sea, are those of PRAYER. We see our blessed Lord Himself, as *the Man Christ Jesus,* occupied in prayer. He Himself comes forth from the mount of Prayer to tread the waters. As the great *ideal* of Humanity—the Exemplar of His people—He would teach them, that if they would overcome the greatest difficulties, if they would tread triumphant on waves of trial and persecution, they must come from their *bended knees.* In walking thus majestically from His mountain oratory across the raging sea, He seems to speak this parable unto *them* and unto *us, that* "*men ought always to pray and not to faint.*" The cry of the disciples, on the other hand, arresting as it did the ear of their Master, and evoking the word of succour and love, tells us in the depths of our extremity *never to despair.* Each of these voyagers on GENNESARET was a witness to the truth of words which their great ancestor uttered in olden times, not far from the scene of their present terror—"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy water-spouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me. *Yet* the Lord will command His loving-

kindness in the day time, and in *the night* His song shall be with me, and my PRAYER unto the God of my life."*

The earthquake, and the whirlwind, and the fire, being now past, there comes "the still small voice." Loud above the riot of the storm sounds the well-known, gentle, soothing, familiar tones, "*Be of good cheer, It is I, be not afraid.*" Their Master's *form* they had mistaken in the lowering darkness, but *the voice* was well known to them. Just as the sailor, when owing to the dense fog, he is unable to descry the beacon in the light-house, hears the sound of the bell, swung on its top, by the force of the tempest.

That brief but beautiful word of comfort is fenced on either side with "*Be of good cheer,*" "*Be not afraid.*" But the ground of consolation is in the middle clause. That fear-dispelling, comfort-giving, "IT IS I," must have fallen on their ears like a strain of celestial music. "*It is I.*" *I* your Lord and Master. *I* who have oftimes before spoken peace in your hours of trouble. *I* who have bidden the weary and the heavy-laden come to have *rest.* *I* whose word has given light to the blind, and health to the diseased, and comfort to the mourner, and life to the dead. I who but a few brief hours ago had compassion on the multitudes, "because they were as sheep not having a shepherd." Think you I will not much rather have compassion on *you*, My own sheep, who "follow me, and know My voice?" "Be of good cheer, *It is I*"—Fear not.

It is the same brief utterance with which He has calmed the storm-tossed in every age. When Paul, in an after year, was in imminent peril of his life, shut up in the Roman

* Ps. xlii. 7, 8.

barracks in Jerusalem, in the Castle of Antonio, that same Lord, at the same midnight hour, stood by the bed-side of His desponding servant, and repeated the same peace-giving word—"*Be of good cheer, Paul.*" Again, at a subsequent period, one of those very disciples, now in this vessel, had a sublime vision vouchsafed to him of his Lord. It was so overpowering and glorious as to lead him to "fall at His feet as one dead." But the same right hand was extended, the same gentle voice was heard, saying, "*Fear not.*"

And who has not felt in the storm-night of the soul the soothing power of that *voice*, and that *presence*, and that *word*? "IT IS I." *Jesus liveth.* Oh! It is the felt presence, and power, and love of a Saviour God which is the secret of the Christian's strength;—not Jesus, a distant abstraction—Jesus, some mythical Being of superhuman might, soaring far beyond human conception and human sympathy;—but Jesus, the *personal* Saviour—the Living One—the Acting One—the Controlling One;—(ay, and to as many as He loves,) the Rebuking One and the Chastening One! The hand of Jesus, and the will of Jesus, and the love of Jesus, is to him seen *in everything.* "*It is I,*" is to him pencilled on every flower, murmured in every breeze, waving on every forest branch. It is the superscription in every event in Providence. It gleams in gilded letters in prosperity. It stands brightly out in the dark and cloudy day. It is written on every sick pillow—on every death chamber—on every vacant chair, and vacant heart. Yes! that little word which rose from the bosom of Tiberias has gone forth to the end of the world, circling in undying echoes wherever there is a soul to comfort and a tear to dry. It gave peace to the chained Apostle in his

Roman dungeon. "All men forsook me," says he, "*Notwithstanding* THE LORD *stood with me, and strengthened me, and delivered me out of the mouth of the lion.*" And that same Divine Talisman that tuned the lips of those lonely tempest-tossed fishermen to songs in the night, is able still to allay every anxious fear—every trembling misgiving. "*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*" "*The floods have lifted up their voice, the floods have lifted up their waves; but the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.*"

Let us learn from this entire passage, that we are always safe when following the will and directions of our Lord and Master.

Notwithstanding the momentary terror and lack of faith on the part of the disciples, it was, as we have seen, in obedience to the express command of Jesus, they had left the shore and braved the storm. "He CONSTRAINED them to get into the ship." With such a warrant as this, they had no cause for fear. Come darkness—come tempest—come shipwreck—come death—come what may, they launched into the deep, "*for the Lord had bidden them!*" If they had left the shore unbidden by *Him*, they might have had good cause for alarm. The first breathings of the tempest would have disquieted them, but with this gracious encouragement, even though we are told that "the wind was contrary," they heeded it not. Their own doubting hearts might have prompted them to relinquish the voyage, and, since "all these things

were against them," to return to shore. But the Lord had given the word! They pursued undaunted their onward course, and this was the helm by which they steered through the adverse waters—"*The Lord hath bidden us.*"

If we, too, when seasons of trial overtake us, thus hold on amid all difficulties, cleaving faithfully to Christ, He will at last cause light to shine out of darkness, and bring us unto a quiet haven.

There is a very striking contrast between the case of the disciples in the narrative, and that of *Jonah;*—the former obeying the directions of their Lord, the latter fleeing from His presence. How did it fare with each? For a time God seemed to prosper the journey of the disobedient prophet. Everything at first seemed to concur in his favour, and promised him a speedy and propitious voyage. He accomplished his land journey in safety, he found a vessel just ready to embark at the very time he needed it, and, with a serene sky and unruffled sea, he holds on his way. Look, again, to the disciples. They scarce have left the shores of Galilee, when the shadows of night begin to fall—a storm arises—opposing winds, and an adverse tide defy their seamanship, and seem to tell that obedience to their Lord's command is impossible. But how did the respective voyages terminate? The faithful disciples, struggling fearlessly on through winds and waves and buffeting elements, at last found, what we shall also find, an ample recompense for every storm we encounter, and every trial we endure—*they found the Lord.* The other, in his guilty flight, was at first borne on by a propitious breeze, but speedily the calm was changed into a storm; and, engulphed in the raging elements he had madly braved,

he was led to feel, in his sad experience, what "an evil thing it is to depart away from the living God."

Or, take another still older example: Look at Lot, at the bidding, not of his God, but of his own worldly ease and selfish ends, seeking the rich inheritance, while his more self-denying kinsman and uncle is content with the poorer portion. At first, all seems prosperous with him; the man of pleasure revels amid his well-watered plains and his luscious vintages; his cattle browse on richest pastures: the sun of heaven shines not on a fairer clime—on statelier dwellings—or nobler flocks. But, mark the end! Abraham, the unselfish, God-fearing, falls asleep full of years and faith. The noblest of epitaphs is to this day read by millions on the old cave of Machpelah—"*The Father of the Faithful,* THE FRIEND OF GOD!" But go to yonder height at Zoar, and note the contrast. See the proud home of Lot. The place that once knew it knows it no more! A canopy of fire is its winding-sheet—the depths of a bituminous lake its sepulchre—a calcined pillar, with a terrible history, stands overlooking the scene of perpetual desolation; and sadder far than that calcined pillar in front—and blacker far than the blackened ashes beneath—the Temple of his own Soul has been blasted and withered with infamy and shame! He who ("a righteous man") might have stood forth in these early ages as a glorious monument of primitive faith and virtue—a bright beacon-light to guide—became a glaring balefire, in the light of which the most distant ages may read the awful warning—"*Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.*"

Once more, THE CHURCH COLLECTIVELY, as well as be-

lievers individually, may find comfort and consolation in the narrative we have now been considering.

The two occasions of the stilling of the tempest, have been justly considered as typical of two great epochs in the Lord's administration of His Church on earth. The *first* (when He was *with* His disciples) symbolising the period of His personal ministry—when, as God "*manifest* in the flesh," He was visibly among them, cheering them with His companionship. The *second*, when after His ascension, He no longer gladdened the Church with His personal presence; when He left it, apparently to battle its own way amid the storms of persecution; but yet, all the while continuing to watch it, as he does now, from *the Heavenly Hill*, controlling every billow which threatens its peace. As He appeared of old, at the fourth watch of the night, just the hour preceding day-dawn, and not only cheered the disciples with the joyful—"*It is I*"—but came up amid the toiling rowers, hushed the storm, and conducted them safe to shore;—so it will be, at the deepest hour of the world's midnight—the hour preceding the millennial-morn! He himself has forewarned us (as if He took the very symbol He employs from that night at *Gennesaret*), that when "the sea and the waves are roaring, and men's hearts are failing them for fear," *then* the sign of the Son of Man shall be seen,—"His way in the sea, and His path in the deep waters,"—and the trembling Church, cowering amid the darkness, will lift up its night-song—"Let the sea roar and the fulness thereof . . . before the Lord, for He *cometh!* He *cometh!* to judge the earth."

Ah! we are apt, in the midst of these environing storms, which threaten, and *shall* yet still more threaten, the existence

of the Church of God—we are apt at times to wonder if its Great Head has forgotten His world, and forgotten His promise. There are ever craven hearts ready to echo the desponding cry—"*Where is the promise of His coming?*" But, fear not! Jesus has not left the foundering vessel to reel and plunge amid these moral tempests that are to close the great drama of time! No!—"*in the fourth watch of the night*"—when the darkness is thickest and the billows highest—"*He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.*" Just as the new creation is about to put on its full robe of morning light, He will hush every billow; and mooring His vessel on the heavenly shore, take His storm-tossed Church to be FOR EVER WITH ITS LORD.

Let us seek to be in the position of men waiting for the dawn—standing on the deck with the cry on our lips—"*Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.*" And when we descry His presence on the waves, let it not be ours to exclaim in terror—He cometh! but there is no pardon in His voice!—He cometh! but there is no mercy in His footstep! Rather may we know the music of these words, which, to all that hear them, will be as the gate of heaven—"IT IS I—IT IS I—BE NOT AFRAID!"

XVI.

The Sinking Disciple

When the waterfloods of grief
Round my helpless head shall rise;
When there seemeth no relief,
Lift your gaze to yonder skies.
There behold how radiantly
Beams the star of faith divine;
Yesterday it shone for thee;
And to-day it still shall shine.
Ask no aid the world can give;
Looking unto Jesus—live!

"And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and, beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased."—Matt. xiv. 28-32.

THE SINKING DISCIPLE.

In the preceding chapter, we considered that memorable scene on the Lake of Galilee, when in the midst of the tempest, "toiling in rowing," the disciples were gladdened by the joyous advent of their Lord. At first, terror-stricken as they saw the mysterious form on the midnight sea, but calmed and quieted on hearing the familiar voice and the reassuring word.

In following out the sequel to this scene, let us direct our thoughts—

I. To the Disciple around whom the main interest of the present incident gathers.

II. To the Scene itself; and

III. To some of its Lessons.

I. The *Disciple* who forms the central figure, in this gospel narrative, is one who has impressed on him a peculiar and powerful individuality. There are in his character, certain strong and well-defined traits—marked lights and shadows familiar to the most unobservant reader. Had no name indeed been mentioned in this passage, we should at once have been led to fix on Simon as the apostle who went, in impetuous haste, down from the vessel's side, braved the stormy sea—walked upon it—sank in terror, and

rose again in faith! Peter's is that composite character which one often meets with in the world, formed by a union of opposites. Bold, hasty, forward, ardent—a soul full of deep emotion and sudden impulse, who in the fever of the moment would do a brave and hazardous thing from which, in a calmer mood, he would be deterred. Thought with him was action. To determine was to attain. In such a mind as his, to *doubt* would have been a grave impropriety. He is the *David* of the New Testament—soaring at one moment with buoyant pinion to the skies, singing as he soars, "*The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom shall I fear?*" The next, struggling a wounded bird on the ground—with the plaintive note, "*My soul cleaveth unto the dust!*" Or, perhaps, we may more appropriately liken him to some of David's mighty men, capable of a bold and dashing exploit—killing, at one time, a lion in a winter snow-pit—at another, plunging through the slumbering Philistines, and filling their helmets with "the water of the well of Bethlehem,"—bringing the longed-for draught to their hero leader. If Peter had been, like these—a *soldier* by profession—he would have been suited for the brilliant sally—the sudden foray—the impetuous assault (some daring feat of arms)—not for the slow, wasting, decimating siege and trench work. His enthusiasm and ardour (honest and sincere at the time) were apt to be damped in the moment of trial and danger. For emergencies to which he fancied himself equal, the event proved he was *not*. A child of Ephraim boldly "carrying his bow," he turned faint in the day of battle! An Asahel, swift of foot, he becomes, in his trial-hour, a "Ready-to-halt." Facing the sullen visages of frowning Pharisees and mailed Romans,

his countenance falls—his knees tremble. Imbecile—pusillanimous—he sinks into the renegade and coward!

Thus, doubtless, was Peter a defective character. He had great faults—but these, too, were softened and redeemed by many noble compensating qualities. Better all that salient energy of soul—that warm, outspoken, hearty enthusiasm—even although it proved often mistimed, often rash, sometimes culpable:—better this, than that cold, repelling, phlegmatic, pulseless spirit, which never kindles into one earnest or loving emotion.

There were other types of character in that very fishing vessel, perhaps more beautiful and perfect. Take John, as the ideal of the Christian man—meek, calm, adoring. His befitting place—the *bosom* of Jesus in his life, and the *cross* of Jesus at his death. His the holiest legacy ever bequeathed by filial love—"*Son, behold thy mother!*" His gentle heart is like some quiet river, unrippled by one wave, mirroring the rich garniture of loveliness fringing its banks, and murmuring, as it glides by, the tranquil music of love. Better this, than the maddening torrent, tearing over rock and precipice, as it hurries to its ocean home. But rather give me that boisterous river, with its foam and thunder, its cataracts and wild music, than the fœtid, stagnant pool, which sleeps on in dull torpid inaction. Better the fervid, enthusiastic Christian, than the men of Meroz—those who "do nothing;" —the cold, timid calculators—men of dull drowsy routine in the religious life, in whose sight fervour and fanaticism are the same things; ever jealous of going too far, never suspecting whether they may not be going far enough; who, knowing that it is an apostolic caution, "always to be zealously

affected in a good thing," adopt the prudent way of avoiding blunders by not being zealously affected at all. Peter's faults were the infirmities of a noble mind; and ere he received his crown, he became a living testimony as to what the grace of God could do in modifying natural temperament. *Simon*, "speaking in his Epistles," is another man from the impetuous Fisherman, on the shores or on the bosom of his native lake. Tradition represents him as having, at his own request, been crucified with his head downwards, in token of humility. We may accept the legend, at all events, as has been remarked, as a significant emblem of the "inversion of his character." At the close of his existence, his old age is like the peaceful subdued sunset which often terminates a troubled day; or like the mountain which, close at hand, is torn and splintered—ploughed up with unsightly scars by spring floods and winter storms. But as we recede, and the soft autumn evening tints fall upon it—the jagged outline is lost; we see only a mass of mellowed glory!—Such was the evening of PETER'S life.

II. Let us consider the description here given of one of these sudden impulses of this impulsive apostle, harmonising as it does so entirely with the rest of his history and character.

Judging from his peculiar temperament, perhaps when the mysterious phantom form was first seen on the waters, Peter may have been the most craven-hearted of all. While the calm John, or the cool, cautious Thomas, may have looked their danger sternly in the face, he may have seen, in the shadowy figure, nothing but the spirit of the Tempest, or the wings of

the Angel of Death, and fled, cowering in terror, to the hold of the vessel. But no sooner does he listen to the comforting, "IT IS I," than shame and sorrow overwhelm him that he had been so "slow of heart," and in the very rebound from faithlessness to newly awakened joy, he resolves by an heroic act to atone for these moments of unworthy pusillanimity. "*Lord!*" says he, "*if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.*"

Even yet, however, his voice trembles as he speaks. Neither his faith nor his motives will bear rigid scrutiny. The very word with which he begins his bold and presumptuous request implies a secret *doubt*;—"IF *it be Thou.*"

Ah! how often does that guilty word mingle still in our deep midnights of trial;—questioning God's voice, God's way, God's will, God's loving wisdom. How apt are we to indulge in unkind, unrighteous surmises; saying, like Martha of Bethany (the "Peter of her sex"), when the Master came to her in the midst of a still darker tempest, "*Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died?*" Let us "be still and know that He is God." There is no room for an "*if*" or a "*why*" in all His providential dealings. Shall we own the voice of God, as we stand in the outer world in the loaded air of summer noontide, when from the heavy clouds there issues bolt after bolt of living thunder? and in the moral world shall we refuse to acknowledge and adore the same? Nay; when out, buffeting the wintry sea of trial, "neither sun nor star appearing, and a very great tempest lying upon us;" while others may only hear the rougher accents of the storm, be it ours to recognise the soft undertones of covenant love, and to exclaim with one who had alike *Nature, Provi-*

dence, and *Grace* in his eye when he penned his words:—"*The voice of the Lord is upon the waters. The God of glory thundereth. The Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful. The voice of the Lord is full of majesty. . . . The Lord sitteth upon the flood, yea the Lord sitteth king for ever. The Lord will give strength unto his people. The Lord will bless his people with peace.*"*

But to return to the narrative:—While there was doubt and misgiving on the part of Peter, in illustration of that strange union of opposites to which I have referred, there was in conjunction with these, *boldness* and *presumption*.

His own thought, doubtless, was to make an avowal of his *faith*, but what he *did* display was *not* faith, but a base counterfeit. It was a degenerate semblance and figure of the true. Rightly named, it was forwardness, fool-hardihood,—the haughty spirit, which is inevitably succeeded by a fall.

Let us always be careful to give things their proper designation. Let us be specially on our guard against looking at vice and virtue through a distorted medium, giving the name of gold to what may, after all, be base alloy; confounding great heavenly principles with hollow semblances; calling evil good and good evil; putting darkness for light and light for darkness. How often do we hear revenge misnamed honour; passion, spirit; prodigality, generosity; free-thinking, liberality; blasphemy, wit; and *presumption*, *faith*. In the case before us, we may be apt, at first sight, to confuse and confound two feelings and emotions, in themselves widely different. Peter in *appearance* is very magnanimous,

* Psalm xxix. 3, 4. 10, 11.

nor do we deny (his Lord Himself owns it) that there was in his bold deed a certain amount of faith and confidence in Christ's ability and power. So far his conduct was commendable; but there was more of the reverse—more of pride, ambition, rashness.

His faith in his Divine Master would have been tempered with a wiser discretion, and a kindlier regard for the feelings of others, had he simply joined with his fellow apostles in inviting Jesus into their ship. But he lorded it over them. There was an implied assumption of superiority in the personal request, "*Bid* ME." We could not even have quarrelled with his conditional "If," had he put it in the form, "If it be *thy* will, Lord." But with a rashness similar to that which drew down an after rebuke, when unbidden he cut off the ear of Malchus, he utters, on his own authority, and more in the tone of a mandate than a proposal, "BID *me come.*" There is a struggle for pre-eminence, a craving to win the highest encomium from his Master. He would wish to make himself out the boldest and bravest of the apostle-crew. It is the saying and the failing of a future occasion put in another form and other words—"Though all be offended, yet shall not I." *

Doubtless, had an injunction to leave the vessel emanated from the lips of Christ, it would have been alike his duty and his joy to obey; there would then have been no sinking, no faltering. If the Lord had "given the word" He would have made Peter's "feet like hinds' feet," and set him upon these "high places." But this frail worm himself takes the initiative. He makes his own will and wish antecedent to

* See Trench, *in loc.*

the will of his Lord, and he must pay the penalty of his presumptuous daring.

Let us beware of such a spirit;—this love of pre-eminence;—this exalting our own reputation or good name at the expense of others. *"Be not high-minded, but fear."* *"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."* Abnegation of self is one of the most beauteous offshoots of humility; and Humility, remember, is the loveliest plant in the heavenly garden. The Lord of the garden delights to tend it and nurture it. The man on the white horse in Zechariah's vision,* rode among the myrtle trees, which were in the *bottom of the valley,* not amid the oaks of Bashan or the cedars of Lebanon. The sweetest note of the lark, though she loves to carol in the sky, is said to be when she alights in her nest in the furrow. Let us seek the shade—not being wise in our own conceits; but "in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

How kindly and considerately does Jesus deal with this bold and rash, yet ardent and devoted man. *"Lord, bid me come."* He forbids him not. Had he done so, there would have been lost to Peter the most valuable lesson his Master ever taught him. Jesus uses the present opportunity to discipline him by his failure to become, as he afterwards did become, a spiritual giant and hero; out of his very weakness He made him strong!

Our Lord, as *Man,* had His own likings and partialities for individual character; and though that of John was probably cast in the human mould most resembling His own, yet His personal attachment to Peter is undoubted. He

* Zechariah i. 8.

seemed to take a pleasure in training him, just as a faithful teacher takes special pleasure and pains in the training of an eager, ardent, impetuous child, or a faithful husbandman in cleansing a fruitful, grateful soil of redundant and noxious weeds.

Peter makes his request. *A single word is all he gets in reply.* The same voice which, a few moments before, gently quieted by a threefold assurance the fears of all the affrighted crew, says, in answer to the bold outspoken ONE—"COME!" He does not refuse, but neither does He give any warrant or promise of upholding power. Peter had said "*Bid* me;" Christ does not say "*I bid.*" Peter had said "*on the water.*" Jesus speaks of no footway there. Peter had said "*unto thee;*" Jesus gives no such invitation.* He utters only the one indefinite word, "COME!" "Come," he seems to say, "bold one, make trial of thy strength; come if thou canst; but it is on thine own risk and responsibility; I give no pledge or warrant of success to thy carnal presumption."

He *does* come! He descends the side of the lurching vessel—the next moment his feet are on the unstable waves. His faith is for the moment strong, and fixing his countenance on his great Redeemer, he travels in safety along that strangest of pathways. But a wandering eye is the first symptom of a mournful reverse. He turns his face from Christ; he transfers his glance to the rolling waves at his feet, and the storm sighing overhead. "*When he saw the wind boisterous he was afraid.*" It was no new tempest that had sprung up; the sea was not opening its mouth wider than before; the sky was no blacker; the hurricane no

* See Stier and Trench.

louder ; the waves were beating as high when he first sallied forth. But with his eye and his heart on the Lord of the storm, he had no room *then* for a thought of danger. Now it was different. Gazing on the tempestuous elements, he trembled at his own courage. He took his eye off the secret of his support, and down he sank like lead in that raging sea.

Ah ! Peter is here a living impersonation of UNBELIEF, which is nothing else but a diversion of the Soul's Eye from God—a looking to the *creature*—to the *world*—to *sight*—to *self*—to *sense*—and ignoring the great Creator, the Blessed Redeemer, and the things Unseen ! The disciple, while he retained his *faith*, saw no waves and heard no winds. The disciple, *faithless*, with his eye turned from his Lord, was awoke to the reality of the maddening elements around him; and *then* the Lord left him to taste the fruits of his rash overboldness. Like Samson, he is shorn of his strength. Like that champion of Israel, he says, "*I will go out as at other times and shake myself.*" But unbelief has caused his "*strength to go from him, so that he has become weak as another man.*"

But pass we now to a more favourable turn in Peter's case. It has been said that he is the most gifted general—not who achieves most victories, but who is able to retrieve his errors; and effect triumphs out of untoward misfortunes and mistakes. Peter had presumed—faltered—was fast sinking. Is he to let the opportunity go without seeking, by some strong effort, to retrieve his honour, and convert that midnight-sea into a moral battle-field where a great fall and loss is to be converted into a great victory? Is the bird taken in the net

spread by itself not to make a bold attempt to penetrate the meshes and soar to his native sky? Yes! as *unbelief* sank him, so *faith* is to raise him again. How is he raised? He honours Christ throughout in this memorable crisis. He might have dreamt at that moment of other ways of extricating himself from his peril. Was there no rope in the hold of the boat? Could he not have asked one of the Apostle rowers to stretch him one of those oars with which, a few minutes before, they had been toiling in vain to make head against the storm? Or, where was his natural or acquired skill in swimming, of which we read afterwards, when near the beach of that same lake on a later occasion, he plunged headlong into the water and swam manfully ashore!* But he resorts to none of these expedients. Having dishonoured Jesus by distrusting Him, he will honour him once more by fresh confidence in His power and love. "*None but Christ*" is His *motto*. His *cry*, "LORD, *save me, else I perish!*" Not all the props you can employ can raise up the battered down-trodden flower so well as the genial sunshine. So this drooping flower turns his leaves to the Great Sun of Righteousness. The Apostle is sinking—but even "as he sinks, he sinks *looking unto Jesus.*"

And as the Servant honoured his Master—as the Disciple honoured his Lord—so does the Lord and Master honour him and deal tenderly with him in return.

He might have righteously left him for a while in his anguish and trepidation, to feel the consequences of his rashness. With the horrors of death taking hold on him, He might have addressed him in words of cutting rebuke and

* John xxi. 7.

upbraiding But He will first restore His confidence. "IMMEDIATELY *Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him.*" The Lord's hand was not shortened that it could not save. Peter's experience was that of the Psalmist—"When my foot slipped, THY mercy, O Lord, held me up!"

And now comes the gentle rebuke. It would not have been well for Peter—it would not have been well for the Church of the future, which was to read and ponder this scene—had the salutary needed reproof been allowed to pass. Gentle, however, it was! He does not address him as the presumptuous *unbeliever*—neither does He reprimand him for making the attempt to come. This might have had the effect of damping his energies for bolder deeds yet in reserve for him. Thus is he addressed by Him who "breaketh not the bruised reed, nor quencheth the smoking flax"—"*O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*" That sensitive heart required no harsh or severe word to enforce the appeal. A *look*, you will remember—a glance of impressive silence, yet of deep significancy—afterwards covered his face with bitter tears. So now, that one brief question would bring before him the memory of a hundred former acts of love and power, all of which would aggravate the unkindness of distrusting that Gracious Saviour. It was equivalent to saying, "Peter! after all that I *have* done for thee in the past, why hast thou now dishonoured me?—why refuse reliance now on my all-powerful arm? I still acknowledge thou hast faith—but in this critical emergency it has shewn itself to be small. Wherefore hast thou wounded me so by this unworthy doubting?"

The accused is silent. He attempts no reply. Perhaps

his tears forbid it. Doubtless he returned to the vessel a humbled man. It was a night which to his dying hour would be much remembered. Yet could it fail to rivet his affections more strongly than ever around that Saviour? If we put a "Song of the Night" into his lips, may it not be appropriately that of the Great Prophet—"*Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song. He also is become my salvation.*"

Let us now ponder one or two of the *practical lessons* suggested by this subject, though these indeed have already been so far anticipated.

I. We learn that *Faith and fear may be found existing together in the minds of God's children, and that we must not make the existence of doubts and misgivings an evidence that we have no faith.*

That Peter had faith, notwithstanding his distrust and fear, is obvious. It was *faith*, though mingled with other lower motives, which led him to venture on the water. It was *Faith* which, as he was sinking, prompted the prayer, "*Lord, save me.*" And in his rebuke Christ recognises the existence of faith, though he speaks of it as small, "O thou of *little* faith."

From this, the desponding child of God may draw a lesson of consolation and encouragement. Ye whose souls are harassed with fears;—who are mourning over the coldness of your love, the weakness of your graces, the languor of your spiritual frame, learn here not to argue from the existence of

doubt, that faith must be wanting or cannot be real. True it is, the further you advance in the Divine life the greater your faith will be, and the fewer will be your doubts. But Christ here does not refuse to stretch out an arm of mercy to one of *little faith.* If you have faith only as a grain of mustard seed, it tells what spirit you are of. For this is no plant of earthly growth that will blossom spontaneously in the soil of the unregenerate heart,—it is "not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." The Bible speaks of various degrees of Faith. And there are different figures employed to denote the operation of this great principle. Its first and simplest act is represented as a "*Looking to Christ,*" then a "*coming to Christ,*" a "*receiving Christ,*" a "*laying hold of Christ,*" a "*cleaving*" to Christ, a "*trusting*" *in Christ.* But the lowest in this scale, provided it be a real faith, gives a sinner an interest in Jesus and his salvation, as well as the highest. The faith of the "weak" as well as of the "strong" rests on the same one Foundation. But mistake us not! We mean not to say that because the smallest degree or measure of faith is an index of spiritual life, that therefore there is no need of further degrees of it. If there be *true* faith, it must, like every other Christian principle, be progressive. This must be the prayer of every heart in which that grace is real, "*Lord, increase my faith.*" While with holy humble gratitude we can say, "*Lord, we believe,*" we must ever be adding, "*Help thou our unbelief.*"

II. We are taught here *the great cause of all the doubts and misgivings of God's people.* It is, as in the case of Peter, *a want of dependence on Christ.*

We have seen when that ardent Disciple first ventured on the watery element his footing was firm, because his faith in his Lord's power was firm; but so soon as his eye was turned from his heavenly Master on the boisterous elements around, then faith failed, and he began to sink! What was the secret of Paul's boldness amid his great fight of afflictions? It was keeping the undeviating eye of *Faith* fixed on that same glorious Redeemer. With a martyr's stake casting its shadow on his path, or with the rage of Nero's lions in his ear, he could exclaim, "None of these things move me."

Is it not even so with us? Why is it that we who once, it may be, were confident in the Lord's faithfulness, and who stood firm, like a rock in the waters, against the temptations that were assailing us, may now be unable to resist their force? Is it not because we have turned away the eye of faith from a reigning Saviour, and fixed it on the troubles and tumults and dangers around; reasoned about the strength of our temptations and the severity of our trials, the greatness of our difficulties, and the imminency of our dangers—forgetful of that blessed truth that *Christ is able to save to the uttermost?* We have doubted His ability and distrusted His faithfulness, and He has now left us to feel "how frail we are."

III. We learn from this narrative—*What is the source of relief to the sinking soul, in its times of troubles and fear.* It is Christ himself—a renewed application to Him as a Saviour.

You remember the well-known incident in old Roman story, when, in crossing a strait in the hour of maddening storm, coward hearts were tortured with terror, as they lis-

tened to creaking planks in their tiny vessel. The sea was lashing over them;—their eyes were dimmed with the blinding spray;—Death seemed to sit on every crested wave. A voice from one of noble mien, sitting wrapt in a military cloak by the stern, blended with the accents of the storm—"The Bark cannot sink which carries Cæsar and his fortunes!" It was enough. The revelation of the imperial presence and the imperial word was like oil cast on the fretful sea. Their courage rose;—with undaunted souls they buffetted its waves, and were ere long on the wished-for shore.

Reader, in the midst of your earthly troubles, turn in self-oblivion to the Heavenly Pilot. A nobler than Cæsar is at your side! He tells you that there is nothing to fear—that there shall be no loss of any man's life—no, not even of the ship—but that you shall all get "safe to land." If duty has called you out to the troubled waters, let Faith—that divine principle—believing, trusting, honouring Jesus—bear you up amid every difficulty and every danger. Say with this same Apostle on another memorable occasion, "*Lord, to whom can I go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life;*" or with another sinking castaway, "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance.*"

IV. Let us here note *the means by which this application is made and final deliverance obtained.* It is PRAYER—"LORD, SAVE *me, I perish.*"

How delightful to think that amid all the troubles of the world without, and all the tumults of the heart within, a

Saviour's ear is ever open—the gates to a Throne of grace are never shut! Yes, though we may be conscious that much of our doubt, and darkness, and despondency can be traced to nothing but our own faithlessness—though we may be conscious that we have ourselves roused the storm which ever and anon may be desolating our hearts—there is yet room for calling upon *Him* who can say to the storms within as to the storms without, *Peace—be still;* and no tempest-tossed spirit in its sinking moments ever applied to Him for help, and applied in vain.

Are there any reading these pages thus tossed with tempest and refusing to be comforted;—whose faith is weak—whose hearts are desponding—whose love is cold—who are mourning over the departure of seasons of spiritual light, and liberty, and joy? Let your hour of doubt and trembling be turned into an hour of prayer. You may have changed in your love to your Redeemer—forgotten and forsaken Him—rejected His grace, and distrusted His faithfulness—but He is unchanged in His love towards you. The storm may have hid His face, but He is as near you as He was to Peter of old. For *you* there is still open, what there was to the sinking disciple—a Throne of grace! Go with the cry, "Lord, save me, I perish;"—and you will find that the hour of supplication will be turned, as with him, into an hour of deliverance. For "IMMEDIATELY *Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him.*"

O wondrous power of Prayer! What miracles, what triumphs does it accomplish! It has turned the volleyed lightning in its path. It has scared away the brooding pestilence. It has unlocked the brazen gates of the

sky, and brought down floods on the thirsty soil. It has smoothed the pillow of sickness. It has dried the widow's tears, and filled the mouths of her orphans. It has brought back the wandering prodigal to his Father's hearth and home. It has wrestled with an angel, and prevailed. It has arrested the ear and moved the arm of Omnipotence. The telescope has with giant bound scaled the stars and traversed Immensity. The electric spark can now conduct its winged messages from sea to sea, and from continent to continent. It can stay armies on their march, and silence the thunders of battle, and give the momentous word and will on which depends the fate of thrones and the destinies of nations. But what is that to a power which transmits messages from the lips of the finite creature to the presence-chamber of the Infinite God?—finding its way where the eye has never roamed, the telescope never reached, science with its lightning-pinions never soared—penetrating the gates, unlocking the garners of Heaven.

Do *we* know this Power of Prayer? Feeling that we are perishing, have we sent up a cry for help to that God who is a refuge to His people in every time of trouble. If so, He *will* send help out of His holy hill of Zion. Why is it that our prayers seem so frequently to go unanswered—that, despite of them all, we feel that we are sinking still? Is it not because they are *not* the cries of those who feel their awful and affecting need of Christ, and are really desirous that His hand be stretched out for their rescue. Let us go with the publican's lowly spirit, and with the sinking disciple's importunate entreaty, '*Lord, save me, I perish!* Lord, I look to thee for safety. There is no safety in myself. I

feel that I am a lost undone sinner, and unless plucked from the billows of sin, I shall perish everlastingly. But, Lord, from the depths I cry to Thee; help Thou me, O Thou helper of the helpless! Shew me that 'man's extremity is God's opportunity,'" and then, as surely as in the case of Peter, Jesus will stretch forth His hand. It may not be, as with him, "*immediately.*" But "*the Lord is good to them that wait for him, unto the soul that seeketh him.*" "*Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he* WILL *strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord.*"

V. We learn, from the narrative before us, *that distrust in Christ's faithfulness is displeasing to Him.—Jesus* RÉBUKED *him, saying,* "*O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*" That question, we have seen, carried an arrow of deep conviction to Peter's heart. *He dared* not answer it. His silence told how deeply it was felt! And does not that same question ring reproachfully in many of our ears; if we are now surrounded with trial or temptation,—disposed to question or distrust the Redeemer's faithfulness. "Wherefore," He seems to say, "Oh, wherefore, unbelieving one, dost thou doubt? Carry thine eye back on thy past history, and dost thou not remember the hours when thou didst taste of my faithfulness and mercy; when my candle did shine upon thy head, and my peace lighted up thy soul with a joy infinite as heaven? Look back, and is not thy pilgrimage journey crowded with Ebenezers, telling that the Lord hath helped thee? Dost thou not remember the hour of trouble when I wiped thy tears; the hour of temptation when I dispelled thy foes; the night of affliction when I soothed thy

sorrows, and whispered peace when all around was death; the hour of prayer and the season of communion, when I made the House of God as the very gate of heaven? And if darkness and tempest have now succeeded—if the calm has been changed into a storm, and I seem to have hid my face, Oh, wherefore dost thou doubt? Ought not my faithfulness in the past, to be an encouragement for the future—a pledge and assurance that I will never fail thee nor forsake thee?"

We learn again, from the deliverance vouchsafed to the sinking disciple, that *there is no situation in which Christ is not willing and able to help us.*

When did He come to Peter and to his fellow voyagers? It was "*about the fourth watch of the night,*" while morning had scarce begun to dawn, and all nature was sunk in slumber! And who, after the toils of the preceding day, would have felt these slumbers more sweet, or nature's rest more refreshing, than the weary Man of Sorrows? But He who had gone to the lonely mountain top, to seek a couch of rest, when elsewhere he had none, willingly forsook even *this,* to come to the help of His beloved disciples! What does this tell us, but that we can never go out of season to Christ;—that there is not the hour in which He is inaccessible to our wants, or will refuse to give us help; that there is not the danger from which He cannot extricate us; nor the trial which He will not overrule for the strengthening of our faith. He is *able* to save—He is *willing* to save. None are beyond the reach of His abounding grace and mercy. As the ocean supports a navy as easily as the bubble on the breaker, or the sea bird sitting on its crested foam;

as the earth supports the everlasting hills, as easily as the tiny grass which clothes its sides, or the cattle which browse on them; so Jesus can save great and small; He is the spiritual Atlas carrying a ruined world. In the season of our deepest extremity, even when, like the apostle, we may seem on the brink of perishing,—the waves of destruction about to close over us,—with such a Saviour there is no room to despair.

Finally, we have here *a lesson of rebuke and warning:* Christ *calls Peter's "a little faith."* And yet, weak and faithless as he was, when we read this narrative, how are we overwhelmed and abased when we think of the poverty and meagreness of *our* faith, when compared even with that of the sinking disciple? We behold him in that hour of tempest, stepping down from the vessel and committing himself to the raging waters. He hears his Lord's voice, and, fearless of danger, travels along the unstable element to throw himself at His feet. We see, in the same moment, courage, ardour, prayer, love, devotedness; and yet the Saviour *reproves* him, and his silence tells that he felt the rebuke was no more than was due. Surely if this could only be called a "*little* faith," what must He who so denominated it, think of *ours?*—when many of us can tell of lives that present one sad history of doubt, and distrust, and faithlessness—prayerless, careless, godless seasons, when the veriest vanities are cleaved to in preference to Christ, and we rush to every Saviour but the one who died for us.

Do not let us harshly and censoriously deal with Peter until we have "considered *ourselves.*" Let us look at his

frailties side by side with our own. Our judgment on the apostle may well be tempered with mercy—our judgment on ourselves may well be mingled with *shame*. Let us be equally noble, as he was, in our avowal of attachment to our Great Lord. Let us be equally ready, when we stumble and fall, for his baptism of bitter tears. Let us be equally resolute in spirit for his martyr-death. If God send us midnights of trial, let these be hallowed and consecrated to us, as they were to him, by a more loving trust in that loving Saviour—leading us the more fondly to welcome the Lord's voice upon the waters, and to take as our motto and watchword for all the contingencies of an unknown future, "WHAT TIME I AM AFRAID, I WILL TRUST IN THEE."

XVII.

The Doomed City.

Ungrateful sinner! on thy future rests
A sadder heritage of guilt and shame,
Who with abounding gospel mercies blest
Dare spurn the Saviour's grace and scorn His Name;
Forget not, though His patience now endures,
The heathen's hell will be a heaven to yours!

"And thou, CAPERNAUM, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee."—MATT. xi. 23, 24.

THE DOOMED CITY.

WHILE following, in the preceding chapters, the Saviour's footsteps on GENNESARET, with no name or spot, in all the favoured region, have we been more familiar than with CAPERNAUM. His ever memorable sojourn within its walls, is now, however, speedily to terminate. Along with other Hebrew Pilgrims, He is about to proceed to the City of solemnities, in order to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles.

But ere He leaves its gates, He must utter in its hearing a solemn monition—a thrilling denunciation, over unrequited love and guilty impenitence. He looks down the vista of ages to that solemn day when cities and their inhabitants shall throng the area of the Great Tribunal, and when He who holds the balances in His hand will deal out, with unerring equity, to each and all, their respective sentences.

It is not often that JESUS—the meek, and gentle, and tender Saviour—speaks in accents of stern wrath and upbraiding; we may well believe He never uttered one needlessly harsh word. When we behold Him, therefore, as the Minister of Justice, standing with the flaming sword in His hand, proclaiming "terrible things in righteousness"—"HE THAT HATH AN EAR TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR!"

We have these three points brought before us for consideration in this solemn address of our Lord:—

I. CAPERNAUM'S *privileges.*
II. CAPERNAUM'S *neglect.*
III. CAPERNAUM'S *doom.*

I. "*And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven.*" We reject the interpretation put upon this clause by some of the older writers, that it has reference to the worldly prosperity of the city as the great sea-port of Gennesaret; still more, another, that the allusion is to its elevated natural site. It is, undoubtedly, in a spiritual sense Christ speaks. His reference is to CAPERNAUM'S exaltation in unprecedented and unparalleled *religious privilege.*

Of all the cities in Palestine, none was in this respect more exalted (nay *so* exalted) as this town of Galilee. *Bethlehem* was "exalted" as the scene of the Manger, and of the Seraphim who sang the advent-hymn of the Prince of Peace. *Nazareth* was "exalted" as the home of His youth: imagination loves to watch in this little city, nestling amid its picturesque hills, the unfoldings of that wondrous Humanity;—to follow Him as He climbed in mysterious boyhood these sunny slopes, or toiled in the lowly workshop of His reputed father. *Jerusalem* was "exalted" as the scene of more thrilling and august events. It witnessed the awful termination of the drama of love and suffering—the Agony—the Cross—the Grave—the Resurrection. But if we would select the most instructive chapter in the Great Biography,—that which contains the most thorough manifestation of the *life* of Jesus, we must seek it in CAPERNAUM;—we must linger in its streets, or frequent the mountain slopes, which looked down on its busy waters. It is spoken of emphatically, with reference to

Jesus, as "*His own city,*" the place where He "dwelt." For the three most eventful years of His life He made it His *Home.* Either within or outside its gates, miracle followed miracle in rapid succession. Bodily disease—sickness—blindness—palsy—death itself—fled affrighted at the presence of the Lord of life; while the very waves which washed its port had been made a pathway for a new display of Power, and murmured their tribute to His Divinity.

Nor was it the *works* of Jesus alone which this favoured city had witnessed. Hundreds on hundreds would echo the later verdict of the soldiers and officers, "*Never man* SPAKE *like this man.*" The noblest of all His recorded discourses was uttered with CAPERNAUM in view. The rocks, and ravines, and mountain summits around, had listened to Beatitudes of love and mercy for which the world had strained its listening ear for 4000 years. That noble series of Parables, explanatory of the nature of His kingdom, was spoken as He was moored in a fishing-boat by its beach. If we cannot even now, read these truthful lessons and words of wisdom without profound emotion, what must it have been to have listened to them, in the living tones of that living voice, and to have gazed on the countenance of the Divine Speaker, "fairer than the children of men?"

And even mightier still than word or deed, sermon or miracle, was, (as we have just noted,) the holy LIFE of this adorable Philanthropist. What a matchless combination of power and gentleness—of majesty and humility! How unlike all human greatness;—how unlike all human selfishness! —a zeal that never flagged—a love that never faltered—a pity and compassion which sheltered the mean, the worthless,

the abandoned, and those "who had no helper." When His public work was done in the city, He was seen betaking Himself, amid falling twilight shadows, to some neighbouring "mountain apart to pray;" or if bodily fatigue demanded repose, no sooner was the cry for succour heard, than He was seen hastening back from His solitude and mountain pillow to afford the needed help.

O favoured CAPERNAUM! honoured for three long years as the abode of "God manifest in the flesh." How surpassing thy privileges! What were the boasted glories of earth's proudest capitals, at that moment, in comparison with this town by the lone lake of Northern Palestine? What was *Rome*, with her imperial eagles, looking down from her seven hills, exulting in the sovereignty of the world? What was *Athens*, or Alexandria, with their schools and systems—their sages and philosophers—looking down from their haughty pinnacles of intellectual triumph on the subject world of *Mind?* What were these in comparison with the honour enjoyed by that city, within whose honoured walls dwelt the Prince of the Kings of the earth—"Christ, the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God?" In its streets, or on its hill slopes, or amid the chimes of its waves, Words of mighty import were first heard, which were destined yet to be borne where the Eagles of Rome had never penetrated. *There* a mighty balsam was distilled for the wounds of bleeding humanity, which the doctrines of Aristotle and Plato had failed, and ever *should* fail, to stanch. No wonder, then, that over *this* His adopted home, His heart should yearn with deepest emotion. His eye wanders first to the further towns, lining these same shores, and which were not un-

familiar with His voice and presence. As He gazes on *them* with tearful eye, thus he weaves His plaintive lament: "*Woe unto thee,* CHORAZIN! *woe unto thee,* BETHSAIDA! *for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.*" But He has a deeper and sterner plaint reserved for another city—a more solemn and emphatic apostrophe: "AND THOU, *Capernaum*" (I turn now to thee, the spot most favoured of all, during my earthly pilgrimage), "and THOU, CAPERNAUM, *which art exalted unto heaven!*"

Is it a far-fetched comparison, if we see, in the privileges enjoyed by this city of GENNESARET, a reflection of our own? What the region around it proverbially once was among the Hebrews ("a region and shadow of death"), Britain was to the old world;—a land of savage barbarism and debasing superstition. But to us, as to them, who once "sat in darkness," light has "sprung up." Cast your eye over the map of the habitable earth, and what the spot, what the nation in its two hemispheres so favoured as ours? I speak not of our worldly prosperity—our national glory. I speak not of our enterprise—our science—our arts—our commerce—our institutions. Regarding all these in their place, we have reason for honest pride. But I speak of our *spiritual privileges,* which may well be prized as a Briton's noblest birthright—the security and conservator of all the rest. Look to other countries, on which the Sun of heaven smiles more brightly and benignantly than on our own, yet cursed and demoralised with horrid rites of impurity and blood—millions bowing to insensate blocks—yearning souls, feeling the void and worthlessness of their own *effete* systems, longing for

some nobler *panacea* than superstition can give;—ten thousand Ethiopians stretching out their unsuccoured hands unto some better God than their idols of silver and gold. Look at empires nearer home. The saddest of all sad features in many of the nations of Europe is, that God's own truth is not free;—that a poor perishing sinner is not permitted to read with his own eyes that precious Word which was intended to be patent as the air of heaven: Oh, is it no blessing to turn from this sickening tale of a benighted world and a benighted Christendom, and see our own land, with every fetter struck from the limb of thought and action, shining like another Pharos—a spiritual light-house—in the midst of the darkening waves? Is it no blessing that we can tell of peaceful Sabbaths, and holy ordinances, and unclasped and unforbidden Bibles?—that free as the streams that leap from our mountain ravines are these precious waters of salvation?—that while myriads of heathens are passing into a dark eternity, or pining unsolaced in the bitterness of broken hearts; we can sit by the bedside of the sick, the forlorn, the bereft, the aged, the dying, and from the leaves of this Holy Book light up the faded countenance with the smile of a foretasted Heaven?

May not He who uttered these words of profound solemnity in the hearing of Capernaum, well look down on this our favoured country, and with solemn and significant emphasis echo the apostrophe: "*And* THOU *which art exalted unto heaven!*"

II. Consider CAPERNAUM'S NEGLECT. He "*upbraided*" this city, along with the others, "because *it repented not.*"

Now it is worthy of note that there is no special or atrocious sin laid to the charge of this Lake-city. During all the period of our Saviour's residence there, we read of no personal insult its inhabitants offered Him. Nazareth, the town of His childhood and youth, has covered, in this respect, its otherwise hallowed name and memories with everlasting reproach. The furious assault its citizens made on the guiltless and guileless Saviour is stated as the reason for His leaving it and coming to dwell in Capernaum.* But in His new home we have the record of no such ignominious persecution,—no such outburst of personal animosity. On the contrary, He seems there to have been honoured and respected. His influence was great; and the most blinded and obdurate could not shut their eyes to the fact that a Great Prophet had arisen in the midst of them. Representatives from all its diverse ranks and offices did him homage—Publicans from their Custom-house—Fishermen from their nets—Prefects of the Jewish synagogue—Officers in Cæsar's ranks and drawing Cæsar's pay;—while "the common people heard him gladly."

But what of all this? While there were some (we may hope many) happy exceptions, with the vast multitude there was continued indifference, cold and cheerless neglect; with many more, daring irreligion, and the indulgence of those unblushing vices which, imported from the Roman capital, had been propagated by an abandoned Court. They heard His words, but they practised them not. They owned him as a Heaven-sent Teacher, but they refused to regulate their lives by His lofty instructions.

In the neighbouring city of Tiberias, that imperial Court of

* Luke iv. 28–31.

Herod was located. This unhappy sovereign was himself the type of hundreds whom the Redeemer had doubtless now in his eye. Herod vaunted no infidelity. On the contrary, he had been the personal friend of John the Baptist. He admired the great preacher's unworldly spirit—his deep and singular earnestness—the novelty and impressiveness of his themes! He invited him to his palace. He listened to his faithful, soul-stirring words—and yet all the while that palace was the scene of shameless profligacy. Herod—this sermon-lover, this Religionist, who could hear the holiest of mere men preach the doctrine of Repentance—was revelling in guilty defiance of the laws of God and man. Patiently he heard John so long as he kept on the great general theme,—so long as he allowed *him* to remain undisturbed in his own wickedness. But when he became a *Nathan* to him—when the faithful, fearless Forerunner hurled the bolt of rebuke at the soul of his imperial master, and dragged to light his secret lusts, he could tolerate him no longer. *Herodias* is retained, and *John* is sent to exile.

So it was with many in CAPERNAUM. They could follow Jesus to the heights of Hattin, and listen to His beatitudes. They could stand for hours on the white sands of the lake as He spake to them from Simon's vessel all the words of the kingdom; but when He urged the necessity of a daily self-denial—a daily bearing of the cross—they were immediately offended. "*This is a hard saying,*" they said, "*who can bear it?*" "*From that hour they walked no more with him.*" This was their condemnation that light (the great Light of Life) came to their city, but they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Has CAPERNAUM in this respect no parallel and counterpart in modern times? Alas! alas! Is it not to be feared that now, as then, men are content with having "a name to live," who are spiritually dead. Thousands there are who come to our churches, who *hear* the preacher, who assent to the message, but go back from listening to the tremendous themes, Death,—Judgment,—Eternity, to plunge deep as ever into engrossing worldliness and sin. The preacher may be heard,—his words may fall like lulling music on the ear, but the gates of the soul are firmly locked and barred against admission;—the Baptist may thunder his rebukes, but some Herodias, some heart-sin and life-sin, will, in spite of them, be retained and caressed.

Are there none now reading these words, whom the Saviour would begin (as He did with Capernaum) to "*upbraid,*" because they have *repented not?* When His scrutinising eye looks down, Sabbath after Sabbath, upon listening audiences throughout our land, all apparently solemn, sincere, outwardly devout, does He not discern, lurking underneath this fair external guise, the signs and symptoms of loathsomeness and decay; like the pure virgin snow covering the charred and blackened ruin, or the emerald sod muffling the volcano. Ah! sermons will not save us—church-going will not save us—championship in creed and party will not save us. *Repent! Repent!* is the sharp, shrill call of the Gospel-trumpet. There must be a change of heart—a change of life—a crucifixion of sin—and with full purpose of heart, a cleaving unto the Lord who died for us.

Like CAPERNAUM in our privileges, let us see to it that we be not like Capernaum in our guilt. Better that we had

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY

been born among a Pagan-horde;—better that we had been kneeling before shapeless idols, votaries of dumb clay, or worshippers of the Great Spirit of the fire or the mountain, than knowing a Saviour, and yet *rejecting* Him—the free-born citizens of a *Christian land*, and yet the enslaved possessors of *Heathen hearts!*

III. We are called to ponder CAPERNAUM'S DOOM. "*And thou, Capernaum*, SHALT BE BROUGHT DOWN TO HELL."

That this refers to no mere temporal judgment, is plain from what is immediately added—"*It shall be more tolerable*," says our Lord, "*for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee.*" Sodom was *already* destroyed. It was the *future* judgment of both, therefore, at the great day, to which the reference is made.

No doubt this future and final retribution has had its significant foreshadowing in a temporal overthrow; for nothing in all Palestine (no, not the dilapidated walls of Jerusalem itself) is more striking, than the contrast between GENNESARET as it *was*, so busy a scene of traffic and life, with what it is now, a spectacle of loneliness and desolation. The very site of the ruins of *Capernaum*, and its sister towns, is matter of dispute. Jordan, as he rolls past, hurrying his waters to the Asphaltite Lake, carries the tidings to its submerged cities, that that once "Sea of *Life*," has become a "Sea of Death," like itself.

But as we have said, we must seek for the full meaning of our Lord's words, not in the grey mouldering heaps which strew the shores of that now silent lake, but in a more terri-

ble scene, when from beneath these crumbling stones, buried thousands shall start at the last summons!

It is a solemn and awful picture here brought before us. The Angels of Judgment are commissioned to speed them with their trumpets, and to gather in before the tribunal, not *solitary individuals*, but *congregated masses;* —City is brought to confront City—Capital to confront Capital!

CAPERNAUM is seen to rise from its shroud of ruins! It is the old earthly Home of Jesus that is now sisted at the bar. Let the Witnesses be summoned! Three solemn Years, like three venerable forms, come forth from the hoary past. They depone how its streets had been trodden by the footsteps, its shores had echoed to the voice, its arraigned thousands had gazed on the mighty works of Him, who, once the Saviour, is now the Judge!

Nor are there wanting individual witnesses to substantiate this testimony. Hear their evidence: One has to aver—'I was stretched on a couch of sickness "ready to die." He came, and by a word healed me.'

Another—'The foulest of diseases had, from infancy, tortured my frame, banished me from my fellows. He gave the mandate. Returning health thrilled through my veins, and those that had before fled affrighted from my presence, beheld in me also a new trophy of His divinity.'

Another has to tell—'My son was trembling on the verge of the grave—a look and a word restored him.' Another—'My only daughter was hushed in that sleep from which human power can effect no awaking. The King of Terrors had torn her from our side. But the Lord of Life entered

our dwelling, rolled back the gates of death, and gave us back our loved and lost!'

Material Nature can even be summoned to add weighty testimony. The mountains whose verdant slopes so often listened to His voice—the midnight solitudes which heard His prayers for the impenitent—the grassy meads where He fed the hungry and compassionated the fainting multitude—the white sands that bore His footmarks—the very waves that rocked themselves asleep at His omnipotent "*peace, be still.*" There is a tongue in every one of them to attest the privileges of the ungrateful city.

And now appears a stranger and more impressive Witness. It is a witness called from the depths of a tremendous sepulchre. Calcined rocks with their riven fronts have borne for ages the significant epitaph of an unexampled overthrow; temple and tower emerge from these abysmal deeps—the hum of a vast City breaks on the ear! It is SODOM, the doomed capital of the Patriarchal age.—The "City of the PLAIN" confronts the City of the northern SEA! "Sinners before the Lord exceedingly," what have ye to plead?

'Had *we* enjoyed,' is the reply, 'the privileges of CAPERNAUM, we should have repented long ago, in sackcloth and ashes. Had that voice of majesty and love sounded in our streets as it did in theirs, we "should have remained until this day;"—the brimstone cloud would have dissolved—the bolts of living fire would have been undischarged—smiling plains and vineyards would have been where for ages sullen death-waters have rolled—we might have lifted up our faces unabashed in this hour of judgment. Lord! Thou Great Judge! to us much was not given—

forbid that *from* us much should be required!' What saith the Righteous Lord? 'SODOM! Justice demands retribution for thy crimes—thy guilt was not without its aggravations—thou wast *not* left unsuccoured and unwarned; the voice and the prayers of the Father of the Faithful ascended for thee—a Righteous man testified in thy midst from day to day against thine unlawful deeds—yet thou wouldst not hearken; the doom of Earth must be confirmed now! Thou City that wert "filthy," be thou "filthy still!"'

But *Thou*, CAPERNAUM! the same Justice demands that far different be THY doom! The guilt of Sodom was guilt contracted in the thick darkness of the old world—a few broken beams only struggled through the mists of early day!

But THOU, CAPERNAUM! what city of earth so favoured? Thy hills were the first gilded by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness—thy waters were the first to sparkle under His radiance. It was no earthly prophet or messenger that came and tarried within thy walls, summoning thee to repentance! Oh, mightier than all preceding Witnesses, thy JUDGE Himself must now take the place of deposition, and testify against thee! *I* warned thee!—I counselled thee!—I lifted up my voice in thy streets!—never did I break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax!—I sought to bring forth judgment unto victory. But my pleadings of love fell powerless on impenitent souls. Thou knewest thy Lord's will, and *didst it not!* Thou wert exalted unto heaven with privileges—be thou thrust down to hell for the misimprovement of them! '*Verily I say unto you, It is more tolerable for the land of Sodom in this the day of judgment than for thee!*'

It is the same principle which will regulate the procedure in the Final Day with reference to *us*. The same great law of unerring equity will be rigidly adhered to—"*To whomsoever much is given, from them shall the more be required.*"

Is there one amongst us who has trampled on unnumbered privileges—the lessons of early piety—followed by a manhood of daring ungodliness, or with whom solemn providential warnings have been guiltily neglected and scorned? What shall the Great Judge say on that Day of just retribution? 'Guilty one! thy doom admits of no mitigation! There is everything to aggravate and nought to extenuate. I made for years thy soul a very CAPERNAUM. I lingered in it, with my footsteps of mercy plying thee with every motive and every argument to induce thee to hear my voice, and turn at my reproof. I spake to thee in *prosperity*—by the full cup; but thou didst drink it unacknowledged. I spake to thee in *adversity*—by desolate hearts and swept chambers; but thou receivedst the chastisement in sullen fretfulness, and didst rush only deeper into worldliness and sin. See that Outcast by thy side! If the mighty works had been done in his case that were done in thine, it might have been far otherwise with him. If *he* had had thy mother's prayers—thy paternal counsels—thy pastor's warnings—thy solemn afflictions,—he might have been clothed ere now in the sackcloth of repentance. But no penitential tear stole down thy cheek—my grace has been resisted—my spirit grieved—my love mocked and scorned. *Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for* miserable thousands throughout that eternity than for thee!'

We are obviously taught by all this, that there are to be gradations in future punishment—aggravations of guilt and degrees of suffering. Of what these are to consist, we cannot tell; doubtless among them will be the gnawing rebukes and accusations of memory and conscience, over abused privileges—the bewailing of opportunities and mercies madly thrown away by us.

In that impressive parable of our blessed Lord, describing the condition and experience of the lost, one of the saddest elements in the woe of *Dives* is unfolded in the reply of Father Abraham—a reply whose echoes will circulate gloomily through the domains of despair—"*Son*, REMEMBER!" CAPERNAUM, *remember!* thou wert the honoured home of a Saviour—thou didst guiltily reject. Sinner, *remember!* how that Saviour stood and knocked day by day, week by week, at the gates of thy soul—*remember!* how thou didst grieve and scorn Him—*remember! that* parental prayer, *that* funeral, *that* sermon, *that* life-time of privilege! Even on earth, how often do we see how memory and conscience together can light up a hell in embryo! Not far indeed from CAPERNAUM, there was an illustration of this in the case of the imperial tyrant, to whom we have previously alluded. HEROD had guiltily connived at the murder of the most innocent of men, and most devoted of ministers. The base deed is consummated. But no sooner is it so, than conscience is roused to its work of retributive vengeance; the image of the slaughtered prophet haunts his thoughts by day, and scares him in dreams by night—"*And king Herod heard of Jesus*" (we read); "*and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew*

forth themselves in him: others said, That it is Elias: and others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead." It is John reanimated to inflict merited retribution on his old destroyer! the stern preacher has come from Sheol! he has been sent from the spirit-world as a minister of vengeance! Conscience sees the grim spectral shadow flit ominously before him, like the fabled ghosts of the murdered;—all his power cannot bribe it—all his courage cannot charm it away!

Yes; this is but a foreshadowing of what will terribly aggravate the sufferings and upbraidings of the lost; some foul deed that murdered (worse than the body) the *soul* of a fellow-creature, will fasten upon the transgressor like the sting of the scorpion, and give him no rest day nor night. The terrible imagery will track his footsteps, and traverse, with terrifying form, his path.

I was a traitor to my Child, will be the harrowing thought of one; he might have been in glory *but for me!* I laid snares for the innocent, will be the self-reproach of another. I sowed broad-cast the seeds of vice in virtuous hearts; they are now piteously upbraiding me as the author of all their misery! I was the Pastor of a Flock, is the torturing anguish of a third; but I deceived them with a name to live, I neglected to tell them of their danger, and urge them to accept the great remedy, and the voice of my people's blood is crying out against me! We had that Saviour in our offer, will be the wild cry of thousands more, but we rejected His love and spurned His grace.

Ah, it is this last which was the crime of the CAPERNAUM

sinner—(*misimproved privileges*), and we fear no guilt will be more general, no reflections more harrowing, than those arising from its consciousness. Yes; be assured nothing will be half so terrible as to be confronted with the charge of *abused responsibilities*. If he be without sail and rudder, the castaway on the raft could not be blamed for inability to buffet the storm, reach the haven, and save his owner's cargo; but a heavy responsibility would rest on the pilot, who, with fully equipped vessel, a bright sky above, a favouring breeze, and a safe navigation, permitted her to run aground, or be dashed on the rocks.

Not only, in the case of abused privileges, is the responsibility greater, but the ruin is swifter and surer! The very *possession* of privileges, if these are unimproved, will only lead to a greater hardness and impenitency of heart. The sun, and dews, and rains of heaven, which warm and moisten, and fructify the living blade, or plant, or tree, accelerate the decay and rottenness of the dead one. As by familiarity with *sin*, its native odiousness is worn away—the first shudder of tender conscience is followed by a duller sense of its turpitude, then the swift downward descent to perdition. So by familiarity with the *gospel*, the urgency and impressiveness of its messages are diminished; just as the Alpine shepherd can, through habit, sleep undisturbed at the base of the roaring cataract, or the soldier can hear without wincing the thunder of the cannon.

God keep us from the sin and danger of being preachers and hearers, and not *doers*—having the head enlightened and the soul unsaved—our privileges only forging the heavier fetter, and feeding and fanning the hotter flame!

Awake, my Brother, ere it be too late, from your sleep of indifference. God calleth on all men, everywhere, to repent. Yours may, till now, have been the guilt of CAPERNAUM—yours its heavy responsibilities; but the Saviour has not yet stood at the gates of your heart to utter the last malediction—announcing that you are, through impenitence, finally given over to judicial blindness! While *Capernaum* still enjoyed the Lord's presence, for the vilest sinner within its walls there was mercy! We conjure you, by the great Day of Judgment—that Day in which Sodom and Capernaum and *we* shall together meet—to remain no longer as you are. Go not down to the grave, with your work undone and your souls unsaved. Jesus is still lingering on your thresholds. It was the wondrous record of three years of miraculous works and cures in the Galilean city—"*He healed* them ALL;" and He is still the Physician who heals ALL diseases! Soon it will be too late to rush to His feet;—He will have bidden an eternal farewell to the souls that have rejected Him, or death may have put his impressive seal on their hopes of pardon. A few more faint "pulses of quivering light," and your earthly sun will have set for ever! The past may be a sad one—you cannot recall it—you cannot revoke or cancel it;—it has winged its flight before you to meet you at the Judgment. But the future is *yours*, and God helping you, the dark and cloudy day may yet have its sunset of vermilion and gold. Up, and with the earnestness of men resolve to flee sin and cleave to the Lord, that that awful hour may never arrive, in which your own knell shall thus be rung—"*If thou, even* THOU, *hadst known in this thy day, the*

things that belong to thy peace, but now they are for ever hid from thine eyes."

Can I close these solemn thoughts without a word of incentive and encouragement to God's own people? The text tells us that there are to be different degrees of punishment in a state of *woe;* but there are other passages in abundance which teach us the cheering corresponding truth, that there are to be different degrees of bliss in a future heaven. One star is to differ from another star in glory. There are to be rulers over five, and rulers over ten cities—those who are to be in the outskirts of glory, and those basking in the sunlight of the Eternal Throne! Is this no call on us to be up and doing?—not to be content with the circumference, but to seek nearness to the glorious centre—not only to have crowns shining as the brightness of the firmament, but to have a tiara of *stars* in that crown? It is the degree of holiness now that will decide the degree of happiness *then,* —the transactions of *time* will regulate the awards of eternity.

And as we have seen that memory will increase and aggravate the wretchedness of the *lost,* so will the same purified ennobled power intensify the bliss of the *saved.* Ah! with what joy will they retraverse life, mark every successfully resisted temptation—every triumph over base passion and sordid self—every sacrifice made for the glory of God and the good of man—every affliction they have meekly borne—every cross they have submissively carried—every kindly unostentatious deed, done from motives of love and gratitude to the Saviour. Work out your own salvation with fear and

trembling. The religious life is *action;* it is not theory—it is not dreamy thought—sickly sentimentalism. The *formula* of the great Judge's sentence on the last day to the *Righteous* is (not "well thought," or "well purposed," but)—"*well* DONE;" to the *Wicked*—"Inasmuch as ye DID it *not.*"

Fellow-sinners, washed by the same blood—fellow-pilgrims, travelling to the same eternity—fellow-prisoners, who are so soon to stand at the same Great Bar,—are we ready to meet the summons which may sooner than we think startle us in the midst of our neglected privileges?—"GO! GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF THY STEWARDSHIP!"

XVIII.

Heroism.

Then rest, poor soul, He bids thee rest,
Nor tremble at the dread to-morrow;
Lean on thy Saviour's willing breast,
And thou shalt know nor care nor sorrow.
No longer trust thy tottering limb,
But cast thy burdens all on Him
Who set His face to tread the blood-stained path,
And without murmur drained His Father's cup of wrath.

"And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."—LUKE ix. 51.

HEROISM.

THERE must always be a feeling of sadness in bidding farewell to a place where we have long sojourned, and with which is interweaved many hallowed associations;—the scenes of sunny childhood—the hills on which we gazed—the stream which murmured tranquilly by the parental home—the kind looks, and kind hearts, and kind words which throw a halo more sacred still around the dwelling of our early youth.

JESUS, being *Man*, participating in all the tenderest sensibilities of our nature, could not be altogether a stranger to similar emotions. He is now about to bid farewell to scenes and localities with which for thirty-three years of a mysterious life He had been familiar. The last three of these, though saddened, as we have seen in the former Chapter, by unbelief and impenitence, were yet linked with loving and momentous memories. His words and deeds were embalmed in grateful remembrance in many a town and fishing hamlet of GENNESARET. The dying, the dead, the sick, the blind, the halt, the lame, had learned to revere Him as a Great Prophet, a generous Philanthropist, a faithful Friend. The very children loved to follow Him,—to listen to His simple teachings, and to lisp His sacred name.* If He refused the proffer of a crown, He was king in ten thousand hearts; and heavily would the tidings have fallen on many, had they

* Matt. xv. 38.

known the truth, that this Great and Gracious Redeemer was about to depart from *Galilee*, never again, save for the briefest of interviews, to return!

If it be sad, even with bright prospects before us, to bid adieu to a home such as I have described, how are these feelings of sadness augmented when that departure is accompanied with gloomy forebodings, too truthful presentiments of evil and sorrow?—the knowledge that there is but a step between the hallowed home-hearth and the chilling blasts of a wintry unbefriending world? When the hand of death has entered a household, and the widow and her orphans are forced adrift amid bleak scenes and stinted comforts, who (save those who have felt it) can describe the fond lingering look turned to the old dwelling, listening for the last time to the murmur of its brook, the sunlight glancing amid the quivering leaves, under whose shadow childhood has oft loved to repose! The youth leaves a father's roof under any circumstances with a drooping spirit. But how are his regrets embittered when he knows that he is entering on a rough and rugged path, about to exchange gentle looks and kind smiles for frowns, contumely, cold neglect, supercilious scorn!

What—if we dare compare human feelings with those of JESUS—what must have been *His* emotions in leaving now the home-scenes of *Galilee* and *Gennesaret* under the tremendous consciousness of the trial-hour awaiting Him? What must have been His thoughts, as for the last time He stands nigh some spot where the Jordan, issuing from the lake, resumes its impetuous course, and, taking His farewell glimpse of the scenes of His ministry and miracles, He hastens onwards to the climax of His life of woe? But He trembles

not—flinches not—falters not! His resolution is taken! With a moral HEROISM unparalleled in the world's history, He seems, in words He afterwards uttered, to be longing for the hour of conflict and victory—"*I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!*"

In this Festival Journey, how diverse the thoughts and experiences of the *Pilgrim crowds*—the *Disciples*—their *Lord!*

The multitudes could participate in no such saddening farewells. These feast-days periodically recurring, formed to them the most joyous events of the year;—holiday times, all whose associations were mirth and gladness; happy occasions for friends meeting friends at the distant capital, and uniting together in the worship of their fathers' God and their own! On ordinary occasions these feelings would have been shared too by the disciples. It was different, however, now. They had recently been receiving mysterious and significant intimation from their Beloved Master of a terrible crisis impending;—how He must needs "go up to Jerusalem" to suffer, to be rejected, and crucified. Their feelings are thus powerfully and graphically described by St Mark:—"*And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went before them:* AND THEY WERE AMAZED; AND AS THEY FOLLOWED, THEY WERE AFRAID. *And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the Chief Priests and unto the Scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock him,*

and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him; and the third day he shall rise again."

How strange, that notwithstanding such an announcement as this, the bearing of Him who uttered it should be so calm, so magnanimous!—that instead of starting at these awful shadows that were now projected on His path, He should commence from Galilee that "Dolorous way," terminated by the crown of thorns and the bitter tree, with tearless eye and unhesitating step; and that the Evangelist has to give, as the closing record of this portion of His GENNESARET life—"*And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.*"

Let us endeavour to ponder one or two reasons which among others must have served to strengthen and sustain the Saviour in setting out on this momentous journey:—in other words, the causes of a resolution and magnanimity so remarkable, with a crisis so appalling at hand.

I. *He was cheered by the consciousness that in now going to Jerusalem He was fulfilling the will of His Father.*

This great idea, this elevated motive, was ever paramount with Him—the impelling power in every thought, word, and deed—"*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me.*" There was an hour appointed by the Father for the consummating of His work on earth. That hour, no bribe, no threat, could tempt Him either to anticipate or evade. A short while before, some worldly, time-serving "kinsmen" urged Him to proceed without delay to Jerusalem, seizing the opportunity of unbounded popularity to claim the Throne of

David, and assert His claims to the Messiahship—"*Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. . . . . If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.*" * His answer was meek and gentle, yet tempered with righteous severity, "*My time is not yet come, but your time is alway ready.*" "There is no restriction laid upon *your* time, and even if there were, you would not be willing to attend to it, if worldly prudence or advancement dictated otherwise. But it is otherwise with ME. A great WILL above regulates my every movement; I cannot and shall not by one hair's-breadth deviate from the path that WILL has prescribed."

But the moment had at length arrived which the Father had appointed for the Great Sacrifice. Daniel's "seventy weeks" of years were on the eve of "accomplishment;" and, in obedience to that Higher WILL, He prepares to depart. The hour strikes which had been waited for by all time, "*and he sets his face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem!*"

Here is the secret of moral strength in encountering *our* seasons of trial and difficulty—the conviction that *our times are in the hands of God;* thus leading to complete and entire subordination of *our* wills to *His.* How it would disarm affliction and bereavement of their bitterest stings if we were enabled to give as the history of our darkest dispensations, "*This is my heavenly Father's will!*" *The hour has come*—the hour appointed by loving Wisdom. "The world's time is any time;" their trials are called "*misfortune,*"—"*untoward accident*"—"*wayward calamity.*" But the Christian, like his Lord, is able to view every occurrence as emanating from

* John vii. 3, 4.

a Hand of infinite love, a Mind of infinite foreknowledge, and a Will of infinite faithfulness. Every phase in his history—every step in his pilgrimage—its most trifling incidents and circumstantials—are *Divinely appointed.* Feeling that he is under this kind and gracious guardianship, he resolves his own will into the will of The Supreme! All that concerns him and his are parts of a vast harmonious plan. The future (mazy, dark, mysterious,) is fully known to One who sees the end from the beginning—educing good out of seeming evil—order out of apparent confusion. Even when a cross (a shadow of his Lord's) looms gloomily on his path, he breathes with unmurmuring lips, "*Even so, Father!*" and sets His face steadfastly to endure His baptism of suffering and blood!

II. Another reflection which would, doubtless, sustain Jesus in this farewell hour, would be the thought of *past fidelity and devotedness in His great work.*

How faithful, *how* devoted, the great Redeemer was during these brief but eventful years of residence within and around *Capernaum,* we have often had occasion to note; from His first utterance in its Synagogue, as the anointed Preacher of glad tidings, down to the hour here spoken of, when He took His last view of Galilee, and proclaimed to its cities, and to the world, those healing words on which His own death was now to impress an untold significancy and value—"*The Son of Man is come to save that which was* LOST!"*

We found, in a former chapter, how His weary human nature often sank under physical exhaustion, gladly snatching a few

* Matt. xviii. 11.

hours of sleep, as best He could, on the planks of a rough fishing-vessel, or on the brow of the midnight mountain. His was the ceaseless activity of holy work; curing physical maladies; expounding heavenly truths; pointing the weak and weary—the burdened and backsliding—the neglectful and the lost—to that wondrous salvation He was sent from heaven to purchase and proclaim. "*Never man spake*"—never man wrought and laboured, wept and prayed, like this Man! Yes, the consciousness that He had been enabled to fulfil His God-like work with such unwearying devotedness, could not fail mightily to uphold His spirit when about to confront more terrible experiences—"THE *hour and power of darkness.*"

Let us ask, How is it with *us?* In the prospect of the time when we too are to be "*received up;*"—that moment which sooner or later awaits us all—when our spirits shall wing their flight from an irreparable past into a changeless future,—can we anticipate or meet it with the joyous humble hope, "I have not lived in vain;—my work is done;—I have served my God;—I have been for long reposing on the merits of that blessed Redeemer;—I have sought to spend existence under the sovereignty of the lofty motive to *please Jesus!*" Or, alas! is it with us, as with many; Christians in name, but whose lives are a mournful *blank?* if they have love to God, it is a fruitless love; if they have faith in Christ, it is a "faith without works"—withered, sapless, unproductive, *dead!*

Reader, if you would seek, when the last Messenger comes, to receive his summons with calm composure and tranquil joy, —*live now to God!* Study, as your model, that lovely Life we

have been tracing in its three most momentous years—that "*Rose of Sharon,*" as it bloomed and blossomed on the shores of TIBERIAS. Let its tints and fragrance follow you to your homes, your closets, your places of business, your scenes of enjoyment. Let all your daily thoughts, words, actions, be moulded and regulated by the inquiry, "How would JESUS have acted here?" As activity, in His Father's work, was the great law of His being, make it also yours. "*Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God,*" was His utterance when, (pillowed in that bosom of everlasting love), the Redemption plan was first proposed to Him.—Sacredly did He fulfil His high resolve, from the moment He entered our world as the Babe of Bethlehem, until, with the voice of a Conqueror, He could proclaim—"*I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*"

Like Him, too, "work while it is called to-day." *His* appointed period for active energy on earth was short—three brief years included it all. *Your* probation-time may not be longer, it may not be *so* long. Ah! "*the night cometh wherein no man can work.*" Think, ere it be too late, how terrible to be confronted by Death, all unmeet and unprepared to *die;*—the oil unbought—the lamps flickering—hours wasted—opportunities neglected—an unprovided-for eternity lying at your door!

If to-night the angel-messenger were to deliver his behest—"*The time is come that you are to be received up;*" could you, with the joyful alacrity of your Lord, set your face steadfastly to meet the great struggle-hour of nature? could you adopt the words uttered from the noblest

of death-beds—"*I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day.*"

III. Jesus willingly "set his face to go to Jerusalem" and accomplish His decease, when *He thought of the glory that was to follow.*

If His last utterance, at this time, in sight of Gennesaret was, that His mission as the Son of Man was "to *save the lost,*" what a theme was this with which to nerve His soul in the prospect of that awful baptism!—"THE LOST," who by these sufferings would be reclaimed;—the countless myriads whose robes, through that blood-shedding, should through eternity be made white!

At that eventful moment His omniscient eye must have had mapped out before it all the terrible realities of Gethsemane's Garden and Calvary's Cross—every thorn of the crown—every mark of the nails—every gash of the spear. But if such was the dark foreground in the earthly picture, there was a bright and glorious background—the perspective of a palm-bearing multitude of triumphant victors. For the joy that was thus set before Him He "*endured.*" He beheld, in this transporting vista-view, myriads who must otherwise have become monuments of inexorable Justice in the dark prison-house of despair, made everlasting pillars in the temple of God, saved by His bleeding love and mercy. Oh, when He thought of that goodly harvest which was to be reaped—a harvest of which His blood was the costly seed;

when he estimated that revenue of glory which, by means of His cross and passion, should, through everlasting ages, roll in to the triune God, He willingly turned His back on the peaceful homes and hamlets of Galilee, fearlessly to confront the hour of His own tragic sufferings.

Is ours the same joy? does this cheer us under all the trials to which we may now be subject;—does it nerve and sustain us in the thought of death itself;—that soon the night-songs are to melt into the praises of eternity—the night-shadows to merge in the glories of unending day? Amid the light afflictions of the present, are we keeping in view the bliss which is hereafter to be revealed; forgetting the tossings of the intervening ocean in the prospect of the quiet haven and the everlasting rest? The earthly father, going to a foreign land to provide for his dependent family, is cheered amid all the difficulties and privations which may beset him, with the thought of again rejoining them—that after a brief struggle in an ungenial clime, he will be back again amid cheerful faces and joyous welcomes. Shall we not willingly submit to any loss, any *cross* our gracious God sees meet to appoint us, if we can exult in the well-founded hope of a blissful future—a glorious immortality, where these very losses and crosses will be found to turn into eternal gain? Let the sweet chimes, coming floating on our ears from the towers of the New Jerusalem, cheer our spirits and quicken our languid footsteps. Let us set our faces thitherwards; and though we may have our Kedron-brooks and Gethsemanes of bitter sorrow now, let us think of the sinless, sorrowless, tearless heaven beyond, where these shall never more be known or dreaded!

And now, in conclusion, let us ask, Are we ready for Death?

—do the words of this passage fall on our ears as a truthful, a beautiful description of the "inevitable hour," the time when we are *to be "received up?"* How many are there to whom every thought of dissolution is strangely different;—to whom death is the most harrowing of prospects—a dark portico at whose shadow they tremble;—a Grim Monarch, whose very name carries with it terror and dismay? No wonder that it is so, if you are content to live in guilty unreadiness for its advent—if your peace is to this hour not made with God—if you are squandering existence without one thought of Hell or Heaven.

But if it be otherwise—if you have fled to Jesus, the Sinner's Saviour and the Sinner's Friend;—if you have personally appropriated all the benefits of His purchase, and are living by faith on the Son of God, who loved you and gave Himself for you,—then is the King of Terrors disarmed of his might;—he is an unsceptred and crownless monarch;—and when you anticipate that solemn hour when he is to make inquisition at the house of your earthly tabernacle, you need no longer think of it with dread;—you may rather associate it with descending angels and ministering saints smoothing your pillow, and waiting as a celestial convoy to "receive you up."

Yes, I again say, Beautiful figure! It speaks of death as an hour of emancipation and triumph. Up to that moment you are, like the fettered eagle, chained down in the earthly cage; but a Messenger comes from the Spirit-World, snaps the encumbering bond, that you may soar a free-born denizen to your true home in the skies!

That time *must* ere long arrive when you shall be called to

die. Are you so living, that you could bid a joyful farewell to your pilgrim warfare and joyfully enter on your pilgrim rest? If you cannot yet contemplate unappalled that final hour;—if you are still living at a conscious distance from God, eternity unprepared for, your soul unsaved;—delay no longer repairing to Him who alone can give you peace; and, as you hear Jesus proclaiming the grand focus truth of His Gospel—*the Son of Man is come to save* THE LOST—as *one of* THE LOST accompany Him in this His final journey to Jerusalem;—go with Him to His cross! gaze on His bleeding wounds! His dying agonies!—see what He did to save *you* and such as *you!* As you listen to His expiring cry, "*It is finished!*"—remember its comforting accents were meant to reach *your* souls. Think not *that Jerusalem* towards which He calls you to set your face is a prize beyond your reach! He has flung open its portals for you. Having overcome the sharpness of death, he has opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Ah! were the procuring of that Heaven dependent on yourself, then you might well despond and despair. But *He* is the "*Receiver up*"—alike "the Way, the Truth, the Life"—"*By* ME *if any man enter in he shall be saved!*" It is because *His* face was set to the Earthly Jerusalem that the Heavenly has unbarred its gates to *you!* He Himself, by His doing and dying, has let down the patriarch's typical ladder; by *it*, you are invited to enter within the gates into the city. Relying on Him who has thus "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light," you can, like your Lord, set out on the final Journey, saying, with the cross beside you and the crown above you, "*Into thy hand I commend my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.*"

XIX

Mary Magdalene.

Weeper! to thee how bright a morn was given,
After thy long, long vigil of despair;
When that high voice which burial rocks had riven,
Thrilled with immortal tones the silent air.
Never did clarion royal blast declare
Such tale of victory to a breathless crowd,
As the deep sweetness of *one* word could bear
Into thy heart of hearts. O woman! bowed
By strong affection's anguish—one low word—
"*Mary!*" and all the triumph wrung from death
Was thus revealed! and thou that so hadst erred,
So wept, and been forgiven, in trembling faith,
Didst cast thee down before th' all-conquering Son,
Awed by the mighty gift thy tears and love had won.

"And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: among which was MARY MAGDALENE."—LUKE viii. 1–4; MATT. xxvii. 55, 56, and xxviii. 1–11; JOHN xx. 1–19.

MARY MAGDALENE.

THE history of Mary Magdalene forms an appropriate link, connecting the earlier with the later "memories of GENNESARET." Her holy and honoured ministry of love interweaves, like a golden thread, the tissues of that Greater Life from which her own derives all its interest and sacredness.

It is strange how a name worthy of deepest reverence should, by a popular misapprehension, which has no ground whatever to support it, been confounded with that of the penitent—"the Magdalene" of the Pharisee's house—whose striking history we have already considered. Of MARY'S previous life we know nothing further, than that she had become a miracle and monument of the Saviour's power and mercy. Her case in the Western *Magdala,** was the counterpart to that of the demoniac on the Eastern Gadara shore, and the exorcism of seven devils, sufficiently indicates the malignant character of the possession. From her name being afterwards mentioned along with "Joanna, the wife of Herod's

* A collection of a few hovels stands at the south-eastern corner of the plain, its name hardly altered from the ancient Magdala or Migdol; so called, probably, from a watch-tower, of which ruins appear to remain, that guarded the entrance of the plain. Through its connexion with her whom the long opinion of the Church identified with the penitent sinner, the name of that ancient tower has now been incorporated into all the languages of Europe. A large solitary thorn-tree stands beside it. Its situation, otherwise unmarked, is dignified by the high limestone rock which overhangs it on the south-west, perforated with caves, recalling by a curious, though doubtless unintentional coincidence, the scene of Correggio's celebrated picture.—*Stanley*, p. 378.

steward, and Susanna," and it being related of her, that along with these, "she ministered to the Lord of her substance;" we may possibly infer that her position in society was not the humblest. It may have been one rather of competence, if not of wealth and luxury. But what was the world with its pomp—what the glitter of Herod's court—what the loveliness of hill, and shore, and sparkling water, that met her eyes all around, when a malady worse far than withering paralysis, or leper's taint, held her in the chains of Satan? Jesus (we know not where) had found her. His word of power had scattered the demon-throng; and never did gratitude so track a deliverer's footsteps, with duteous love and tears. From that hour she became a devoted follower of her Great Lord—a model Christian, worthy the imitation of all believers, and more especially those of her own sex.

Our first introduction to her in sacred story, is in a reference the Evangelist makes to a missionary tour of Jesus and His apostles, through the towns and villages of Galilee.* It is on that occasion we find her associating with the other honoured females we have already mentioned, in providing for the wants of the homeless Saviour. She had probably, a considerable while before this, been attached to His person and cause; but with beautiful modesty she has kept in the shade—shunned publicity. It is only when acts of womanly devotion and kindness are required, that this quiet star is seen noiselessly and unobtrusively shining in her appropriate sphere. In gentle considerateness she ministers to the indigence of her pilgrim Lord, as she afterwards embalmed His corpse, watched by His shroud, and wept at His grave. No

* Luke viii. 1–4.

Apostle truly, of all the company, loved the Redeemer more than she. It must have been pure disinterested affection for Him, which alone prompted her to undertake that long journey, we spoke of in last chapter, to the ever memorable Passover which witnessed His crucifixion. The *males* from all Palestine, it is well known, were wont to assemble at the public festivals in Jerusalem, while the females "tarried at home." MARY, however, had heard from His own lips strange and mysterious intimations of approaching ignominy, suffering, and death. She cannot brook the thought of separation in the prospect of an hour like this. She feels she can do but little in the way of active service—feeble would be her interposition when the hour of danger came—impotent her arm to ward off those legion foes; but if she can do no more, may she not contrive, by word or look, to solace these seasons of mysterious anguish? If death is indeed to stamp its ghastly lineaments on that holy Visage, can she not be hovering near at hand, to assist in performing the last sad tribute of affection? may not her hands serve, in some unknown way, to soothe and smooth that dying pillow, and close those lips which uttered the first words of mercy her soul ever heard? Her resolve is taken; and among "the women which followed him from Galilee," when "he set his face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem," was MARY OF MAGDALA.

Our next meeting with her is at the most solemn spot of earth—the most solemn moment of all time—lingering nigh the cross on which her adorable Redeemer hung, in company with "the mother of Jesus, and his mother's sister, and Mary the wife of Cleophas." How acute and poignant must have been the anguish of that hour—the rude taunts of ruffian sol-

diery sounding in her ears—the cry of "Crucify Him," ascending from the infuriate crowd—along with other base indignities offered to the unmurmuring Sufferer. How willingly would her own tender feelings have induced her to rush from the scene of ignominy and shame, and bury her griefs, as the disciples were unmanfully burying theirs, in some secluded chamber in Jerusalem. A concern even for her own personal safety, might have dictated withdrawal from that arena of wild bloodshed and terror; but while others (His trusted friends) had grown cruelly faithless, "perfect love," in *her* case, had "cast out fear"—her love was "strong as death;" and when in that hour, around the cross of the Eternal Son, "deep was calling unto deep"—all God's waves and billows rolling over Him—she gave proof of the saying, that "many waters cannot quench love, nor many floods drown it."

Pre-eminent indeed was the claim which that Saviour had on the devoted gratitude and love of this woman. In addition to dispossessing her body of fiendish tyranny, enthroning reason on its abdicated seat, He had evidently lighted up her soul with gospel peace, and cheered her future with gospel hopes. The feeling uppermost in her heart doubtless was, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" Like the devoted crew in the sinking vessel, who will rather go down with their faithful Captain than leave Him in the hour of extremity—she, her sister Heroines, and the Beloved Disciple, are willing to brave every indignity and danger—aye, death itself—rather than desert their gracious Lord. Doubtless, the eye which from the cross recognised His own mother and *named* her, would not fail to note, in the devotion of the kindred spirit at her side, a lovely sequel

to previous constancy and devotion. How He would be cheered and sustained, by this loving sympathy, in that hour of all others when He most needed it! On the other hand, how fondly would *they* receive His last look! How would these accents linger in their ears, as they wended their sorrowful way back to the city—"*Son, behold thy mother! mother, behold thy Son!*"

But the ministry of love is not ended. Joseph of Arimathea had "begged the body of Jesus," and, wrapping it in a linen shroud, "laid it in a new tomb." Nicodemus, too, had provided a mixture of myrrh and aloes—an hundred pounds weight—and embalmed the corpse. This, in ordinary circumstances, might have relieved from the need of additional expenditure on costly spices, or making further provision for the interment. But theirs was no common, no ordinary attachment; although, even in *this* beauteous tribute of affection, we have proof that while love was strong, *faith* was weak. Amid the humiliations of that awful hour, when they beheld the King of Terrors effecting so signal a triumph, all their fond hopes regarding the "Messiahship" and "the kingdom" seem buried in their Lord's sepulchre. He had told them plainly that He was to be killed, laid in the grave, and in three days rise again.* But the insignia of death had been so terribly imprinted on their memories as to exclude every nobler presentiment. The preparation we find them making for embalming the body, too truly reveals the irresistible conviction which had seized their minds, that His flesh was to share the common doom of mortality, and to be laid in its long home.

The spices and perfumes were duly purchased on the Fri-

* Luke xxiv. 6, 7.

day evening; and after the hours of the paschal Sabbath (the most sacred of all the year) had elapsed, Mary Magdalene is seen, in the early dawn of the first day of the week, hastening to the spot where all she most loved lay silent in the domain of death. As she and the other Galilee women enter the garden gate, their first thought is as to how they shall be able to remove the incumbent stone. They are nearing the spot. Lo! the stone is already rolled aside;—its fragments are scattered around the mouth of the sepulchre. MARY, in a moment of panic, leaves her companions and rushes into the city to carry to the disciples the tidings of the deserted grave. The thought of rude hands pillaging the sepulchre, and taking the loved Inmate away, alone seems to have occupied her. She has never entertained the possibility of her Lord having risen. She had expected to have seen his cherished form again, to have bathed his pale countenance with her tears, and laid the embalmed corpse in its rocky bed. Blinded to grander realities by her overmastering grief, in an agony of sorrow she pours out her painful tale to the disciples, "They. have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him."

Meanwhile, the other women who have lingered behind, see a young man seated in the vacant tomb, clad in long white raiment—the emblem of gladness. He announces the startling tidings that the Lord they loved had risen, that He was to go before them into Galilee, that *Gennesaret* and its shores were again to hear the familiar music of His voice. "He goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him, as he said unto you."*

* Matt. xxviii. 7.

Peter and John, on hearing the strange account from the lips of Mary, had hastened to the sepulchre. They had entered it—beheld with their own eyes the napkin and linen clothes lying by themselves, (the undoubted trophies of victory,) and yet, with mingled doubt, and wonder, and terror, they "went away again unto their own home!" Mary, unable to run so quickly as they, had followed their steps to the tomb, where (in the most touching portion of the wondrous story) we find her alone, alone with her tears. "*Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping!*" Still is the idea of a risen Saviour by her undreamt of. She is filled with sorrow at the loss of a loved friend—indignant, poignant anguish at the thought of rude hands and iron hearts stealing His remains away. The death stillness in that silent place seemed to echo the dismal taunt, "Where is now thy God?"

For the first time she ventures a nearer inspection of the grave. Stooping down into the deserted vault—lo, two angel forms have taken their places, "the one at the head, the other at the foot where the body of the Lord had lain." The celestial messengers are the first to break silence. In affectionate sympathy with her fast-falling tears, they put the question, "*Woman, why weepest thou?*" We might have expected at that lonely hour and lonely spot, with two mysterious visitants from the spirit world, that she would have been agitated and affrighted; but her grief was too acute, her mind too much rivetted on one absorbing topic. She repeats her sorrowful answer, "*They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.*"

There is often, at a time of trial and bereavement, some peculiar phrase or turn of expression which we come almost

mechanically to use, and which seems at last naturally to well forth from the depths of the smitten heart. We find, in the case of Martha and Mary of Bethany, that the stereotyped utterance in their season of bereavement was, "*If the Lord had been here, our brother had not died.*" In MARY'S case she seems to have attuned her lips to the plaintive lament, "*They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.*" She reminds us of the picture given in the Song of Solomon, of the spouse roaming the streets of the city with dishevelled tresses and tearful eye, in search of her Beloved, saying, "I sought him, but I found him not; I called upon him, but he gave me no answer."

But "the Lord is good to them that wait for him, unto the soul that seeketh him." She hears a footfall, and in turning about sees by her side a Solitary Figure. The angel's question is repeated. The Stranger asks the cause of these hot tears. She supposes him to be the gardener, and in importunate urgency demands—"*Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.*" Love will brave anything; it feels as if it could cope with impossibilities, even though it should be a female arm bearing away a dead body by its own unaided strength. One word from the Stranger's lips dissipates every shadow of darkness,—dries every tear—"*Jesus saith unto her,* MARY!" It was the first word His risen tongue had spoken. MARY! He needed no other utterance. It is "the voice of the Beloved!" "His sheep know his voice." He calleth this His own sheep by name, and leadeth her out! "*She turned herself, and saith unto Him,* RABBONI, *which is to say,* MASTER!"

Wondrous meeting between the great moral Conqueror

and a weeping woman! between the Great and Good Shepherd and this bleating sheep of His smitten and scattered flock. The Shepherd had been "smitten"—the sheep had been "scattered"—but He is now fulfilling the accompanying promise, "*I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.*" * And how gently that hand is turned! He appeared to her in no overpowering splendour, no outdazzling glory. She mistakes Him for the *gardener*. Though surrounded with the evidences of victory, He is still the lowly MAN, the Brother, the Friend. He rose with the same heart of unaltered and unalterable love with which he died, "THAT SAME JESUS!" The experience of the Psalmist was fulfilled in that of this honoured disciple—"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Weeping had endured during the two preceding nights, but joy came in the morning. She rushes into the city with her heart bursting with the wondrous tidings—"*I have seen the Lord!*" Words long familiar to her, had now a new and nobler meaning impressed on them as they glowed under the sunbeams of A FIRST CHRISTIAN SABBATH, —"*This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad of it!*"

Ah, how God honours waiting faith! The Disciples, in their doubt and selfish sorrow, had stood aloof from the scene of ignominy and death—they forfeited the first glorious surprise, the first coveted benediction. But Mary had continued at her ministry of watchful love, and in her case a new testimony was added to the faithfulness of God to His own recorded promise—a promise equally applicable to his waiting, watchful, prayerful people in every age—"*Wait on the*

* Zech. xiii. 7.

Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

Let us learn, from the experience of Mary, the true and only source of comfort to the dejected, downcast, sorrowing spirit. Angels were *there*. *They* had spoken to her kind and soothing words, but they could not dry one tear. They found her in floods of grief, and in grief they left her. It was not till the *Lord of Angels* drew nigh and spake, that her sorrow was turned into joy!

Observe, moreover, that it was not the *Form* of Christ—His bodily appearance—that dispelled her doubt and lighted up her soul with peace. It was His VOICE! that mighty *Voice* which had first bid away the demon-throng that ruled her wretched body! The *Person* of Jesus is now withdrawn from the eyes of His church. His glorified body is hid from our view within the curtained splendours of the Holiest of all. But His *Voice* is still heard. The echoes of His tender soul are still preserved fresh to us as they sounded to Mary, in His own Blessed *Word*. We can still write over every precious promise it contains, "*Thus saith the Lord;*" "*Verily, verily, I say unto you.*"

And now, we might imagine Mary's joy complete. Jesus is once more by her side. The "little time" He spake of, "Ye shall not see me," is now past. She has entered on the "while" that "Ye *shall* see me!" There seems now to lie before her, a happy future of perpetual intercourse, that is to know no interruption till her own dissolution summon her away! But different are His purposes towards His Church and people. "Touch me not," says He, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto

them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."* His work is incomplete if He do not ascend to His Mediatorial Throne. Though dear to them would have been His living, loving, personal Presence, yet there are purposes of mercy still unfulfilled which demand His departure—the Intercessory work—the comforting Mission of the Paraclyte. He is to leave them, and yet *not* to leave them. Tossed on *Gennesaret*, He is still up on the Heavenly Hill bending on their agitated bark His watchful eye, and coming invisibly to their aid in every hour of extremity.

"*Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended!*" But, did not these words indicate to that lowly disciple that there was a time coming (though not *now*) when she *should touch* Him? Yes, on the Last and Great Day, when He was to come again and receive His people to Himself, and to utter in their hearing the joyous word of welcome, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" This Resurrection Morning at Golgotha was in *one* sense a "*coming again*," but not *the* GREAT *coming!* He is now a Pilgrim Lord, in haste to be gone to finish in glory His vast undertaking. But soon these clouds shall be rent, and soon the Conqueror of Calvary, seated on His throne, will greet the no longer weeping Magdalene with the old name of affection;—in unutterable love He will say unto her, MARY! She was not ashamed of Him and His word, while other disciples were; and He will then "*confess her name before his Father and before the holy angels.*" Great was Mary's honour and privilege in

* John xx. 17.

seeing a dying and a risen Jesus—in being last at His cross and first at His sepulchre. But if we be of Mary's faith, and partake of her lowly self-denying love, we shall be sharers too in her joy on that glorious Easter-morn of Creation, when our Lord shall come forth, not from the swaddling bands of death, but with His head encircled "with many crowns." She "ministered to Him of her substance," and waited on His person with unwearying devotedness. Though in this respect we cannot imitate her, we can do what is in His sight equivalent;—we can bestow our time, our substance, our personal exertions, in lowly offices of love and mercy to His people—"*Ye did it unto* THEM." "*Ye did it unto* ME!"

We know nothing further of Mary's earthly history beyond what is here told us regarding the interview at the sepulchre. It is more than probable—nay, we believe certain—that she met Him again on his return to *Galilee*, and followed His footsteps on her loved native shore. The last words recorded as having been uttered by her are these—"I HAVE SEEN THE LORD!" They are true of her at this hour! She is now "*seeing*" Him without a tear, and that for ever and ever!

May Mary's gladsome exclamation be ours, when we are waking from our sepulchres! In turning round at the Archangel's summons in the darksome cell of the grave, may it be to *see Jesus* standing with looks and tones of ineffable kindness, ready to pronounce our *name* as one written in His own Book of Life! Happy for us if we can say, even now, in joyful hope, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for *we shall see Him as He is!*"

Meanwhile let us exult in Him as an unchanged and unchanging Saviour—a *Brother* born for adversity. The message which Mary bore to the disciples was a message to the Church in every age—"Go, tell my BRETHREN." Comforting thought! The risen, exalted, crowned *Jesus* is "not ashamed to call us *Brethren!*" Even when He stood on the field of His triumph—Death a dethroned monarch under His feet!—yes, even then, when the glories of Heaven were full in view,—the crown, the throne, the universal homage—when He saw the gates of Heaven lifting up their heads, that He, the King of Glory, might enter in—He speaks of the redeemed sinners he came to save as *Brethren!* And when He refers to His own entrance into the beatific presence—the glorified Son returning to the bosom of the Eternal Father—mark His words—"MY Father and YOUR Father, MY God and YOUR God!"

Arise, then, and let us go on our way rejoicing. We have glorious anticipations!—we have a glorious Precursor! *"Lo!"* said the angel, *"He goeth before you into Galilee!"* Joyous must have been the thought to Mary and the other women, in returning the long road to their distant home, *the certainty of their again meeting their Lord!* If they had left Judea under the impression that they had bid Him farewell for ever—that ere they reached the shores of Tiberias the chariot-cloud would have borne Him away—with heavy and disconsolate hearts would they have set out on their pilgrimage! But the angel's implicit word—*"There shall ye see Him,"**—must have put gladness into their hearts, and caused them with buoyant footstep to undertake the journey!

* This is repeated by Himself, Matt. xxviii. 10.

Pilgrim believers! yours is the same strong consolation! You shall meet Him again on a better than any GENNESARET shore, to enjoy blessed interchanges of love, an everlasting Sabbath-feast in a Sabbath world!

"*He goeth before you.*" It is a blessed watchword for every Zionward Traveller. You need not dread the way to the "long home,"—"*He goeth before you, lo! He Himself told you!*" Have your eye ever fixed on these Heavenly shores, these everlasting hills; for "THERE SHALL YE SEE HIM!"

XX.

The Feast on the Shore.

Sun of my soul! Thou Saviour dear,
It is not night if Thou be near;
Oh! may no earth-born cloud arise
To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes.

Abide with me from morn to eve,
For without Thee I cannot live;
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without Thee I dare not die.

Thou Framer of the light and dark,
Steer through the tempest Thine own ark;
Amid the howling wintry sea,
We are in port if we have Thee.

Come near and bless us when we wake,
Ere through the world our way we take,
Till in the ocean of Thy love
We lose ourselves in heaven above.

"After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the SEA OF TIBERIAS; and on this wise shewed he himself."—JOHN xxi. 1–15.

THE FEAST ON THE SHORE.

WE are once more summoned in thought, in this beautiful closing chapter of John's Gospel,* to the *Lake* of GENNESARET.

Since we last followed the footsteps of JESUS there, the Great event had been accomplished. That Adorable Being, whose miracles of love and power had hallowed its shores, had expired in anguish on the cross, and risen in triumph from the tomb. The mighty debt of ransomed myriads had been paid; glory had been secured to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will to men!

We do not wonder to find that the Disciples have returned again to their native sea, when we recall the announcement referred to in the preceding chapter, made first by the angels and repeated by the Lord Himself, that He was *"to go before them into Galilee,"* and that *there they were to see Him.*

We naturally love those localities which have been specially consecrated to us by early and hallowed associations. No spot is so dear to the Hero, on his return from the scene of his triumphs, as the village where he was born, or the banks

* This chapter appears, and probably is in the exactest sense of the word, a *postscript*. . . . If we call John i. 1–14, the prologue, this we might style the epilogue of his Gospel. As that set forth what the Son of God was, before He came from the Father, even so this, in mystical and prophetic guise, how He should rule in the world after He had "returned to the Father."—*Trench on the Miracles*, p. 453, 454.

of the stream where childhood, in its young morning of joy and hope, delighted to wander. More cherished still is the place associated with spiritual blessings—the room sanctified by a father's counsels and a mother's prayers—the dwelling where we held endeared communion and intercourse with Christian and congenial hearts—the House of God where we first listened to the joyous word which brought life and peace to our souls.

Might not Jesus, AS MAN, participate to some degree in such feelings, when we find Him now seeking out once more His loved and honoured haunts on Tiberias ere He ascended to glory? Every creek and bay, every hamlet and mountain slope, had some memorial of mingled majesty and love. There poverty, disease, demon fury, death itself, had surrendered and succumbed at His word. The very sea and storm had owned His might, and crouched submissive at the same omnipotent mandate.

And if these scenes were sacred and hallowed to the Master, equally sacred would they be to the Disciples. There they had listened to His utterances of matchless wisdom—there they had been summoned by Him to undertake their Great Embassy. Busy as they were now once more at their old occupation on the Lake, wherever they turned their eye, its undulating shores must have been fragrant with His name and presence. *Capernaum* rose before them with its crowded memories of power and mercy. Yonder were the bifurcated peaks of *Hattin*, where the most wondrous of discourses was uttered;—yonder was the plain, flushed now with the loveliness of spring, where the Sower had sowed;—yonder, in the far north, was the green table-land where the barley

loaves were dealt out as emblems of mightier spiritual blessings;—yonder, hiding itself amid sterner nature, was the scene of demoniacal conquest;—there, yet again, the bleak mountain oratory, where the Lord of all this wondrous Panorama poured out His soul in the ear of His Father. And when night fell, and the stars looked down, at one moment, from their silent thrones, and the next were swept from the heavens by the sudden blast, the Apostle fishermen would remember the august Form who trode erewhile these very waters, and the Voice that mingled with the moanings of the tempest, saying, "Peace, be still"—"*Fear not, it is I, be not afraid.*"

Can we doubt that these solemn and manifold remembrances would now oft tune their lips on their lonely night watch;—that day after day they would be thus interrogating one another, "Where shall we see Him?" "When shall we again hear His longed-for voice?" He is faithful who promised that He would meet us here again. "Even so; come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Seven of them—James and John, Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, and probably Andrew and Philip—have been out on the Lake the livelong night; but their toil, as on a former occasion, is unrecompensed. Morning begins to streak the mountains of Naphtali—distant Hermon is unveiling his diadem of snow. As they approach within a few cubits of the shore, in the grey dawn of that morning-light, a lone figure attracts their eye—"*they knew not that it was* JESUS!" The first word He uttered might have told them all!—"CHILDREN!" Yet still they recognise Him not! He appears but as a passing wayfarer whom curiosity has drawn to watch the mooring of the boat or the shingle! He inquires if they

have any meat, any fish captured that might serve for a morning meal? They answer despondingly that they had none! The mysterious Stranger bids them "*cast out on the right side of the ship.*" The result was so vast an enclosure of fishes that they were unable to draw it to land. The quick-sightedness of love discerns the divine Presence;—the similarity of the present with a former occasion has led the Beloved John to scrutinise more closely the person of the Speaker.* Catching up the sweet music of that well-known voice, he is the first to reveal the joyous secret, whispering it first with half-trembling lips into the ear of his chief associate,—"*It is the Lord!*" Peter, with characteristic impetuosity and fervour, girts around him his coarse fisherman's tunic, springs into the sea and swims a hundred yards to shore, in order that he may cast himself soonest at the feet of his Great and Good Master. The other disciples follow at leisure, dragging with them the net with its encumbering load!

Who can describe the profound emotion of that meeting—at that calm hour when all nature was hushed and still? It is simply and artlessly told in the Gospel narrative. No strong or exaggerated effects are inserted by the Apostle to mutilate the simple grandeur of the picture. Not a tear, not a word, not a question is recorded. Nay, in significant silence they confront THE HOLY ONE—"*None of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord!*"

But there was a strange—it may be a *miraculous*—provision ready for them at that landing-place—"*a fire of coals, fish laid thereon, and bread.*" The feast had been prepared by their adorable Lord. Ere inviting to partake of it,

* Alford.

however, He bade them drag their nets to land. Peter in a moment complied with the request, and it is specially noted that, full as the net was, and that too of "*great fishes,*" it was brought on shore unbroken.

"*Come and dine*" * was the brief invitation tendered and accepted. The Master and his seven disciples surround that lowly board. "*Jesus came, and took bread, and gave them, and fish likewise.*"

Strange and mysterious transaction! We are at once led to inquire as to its signification and meaning. A feast of the kind did not seem in itself necessary at that spot or hour. The fishermen disciples were near their own Bethsaida dwellings, and the risen body of the great Redeemer, we have reason to believe, was not dependent, as it was before the Resurrection, on the "bread which perisheth" to sustain it. We have already found that many of our Lord's actions around these shores were symbolic of some great spiritual truths. We cannot for a moment doubt that the present is to be classified with these, and that that morning hour and morning meal were fraught with momentous lessons to the disciple-guests, and to the Church in every age.

Let us seek, with God's blessing, to gather from this minute narration some of that solemn instruction it was designed to impart, specially to the disciples, and, in the main, also to ourselves.

I. Before speaking of the Feast, let us, for a moment,

* "The verb (ἀριστᾶν), like the Latin *prandere*, was applied by the ancients to any meal which was taken before supper, and in Greek writers, even in Homer himself, ἄριστον signifies breakfast. That meal is intended in this passage."—*Titman's Commentary on St John*, p. 346.

advert to the same general lesson, which a previous similar incident furnished, that *God honours and consecrates daily toil.*

The disciples met their Lord while they were engaged with their nets and boats, prosecuting their former calling. A risen Jesus would thus teach us, that instead of worldly industry proving a hindrance and impediment to the religious life, it may rather, if not perverted and abused, become the very channel through which God delights to meet His people—

> "We need not bid for cloistered cell,
> Our neighbour and our work farewell."

It is a healthful and encouraging lesson in this every-day working world of ours—to the merchant at his desk, and the apprentice at his counter, the artizan at his hammer, the ploughman at his field, and the cottager at her wheel. It tells that that tear and wear—that "loud stunning tide" of human care and incessant toil—so far from being incompatible with the service of God, may be made by Him the very medium for higher and more exalted revelations of Himself.

There are times, indeed, when worldly work—the grinding wheels of business—must be hushed, and we are alone with God. There are solemn seasons when the din of earth dare not intrude;—Closet hours—Sabbath hours—Sanctuary hours, without which the spiritual life would languish and die. Jesus had met the Disciples lately, in "an upper chamber in Jerusalem." It was their solemn convocation on the *first day of the week;—Gennesaret,* with its nets and fishing-vessels, was forgotten *then;*—it was the Day and the Place of prayer and communion. Jesus met them as He delights to meet

His people still in their Sabbath assembly, and "breathed upon them, and said, Peace be unto you, receive ye the Holy Ghost!" But having shewn us these, His own disciples, in their *Sabbath* attire, he would seek to shew us them also in the rough *undress* of every-day life. He had left them for a while with the indefinite assurance—"I go before you into Galilee, there shall ye see me." How, meanwhile, are they to employ themselves? are they to remain in listless inactivity at their native village? are their boats to be moored on the beach, and their old means of honest industry abandoned? No; if there be no immediate apostolic work ready for them, like their "beloved brother Paul," at a future day, when, side by side with the tent-makers of Corinth, he plied his busy task, they will teach a great lesson, to the world and the Church, of how God loves honest earnestness in our lawful worldly callings, and how, moreover, diligence in business may be combined with fervency in spirit, serving the Lord! Jesus tells *us* He is *to meet us again;* but we are not, meanwhile, with hermit spirits, to abandon life's great duties. We are to prosecute these with unabated ardour. Let us never forget that it was while the disciples were out, as formerly, with their fishing craft, toiling all night, and returning faint and weary in the morning light, that *Jesus met them* and put honour on their laborious efforts by bidding them *"let down once more for a draught,"* and filling their empty net with *a multitude of fishes!*

II. *The disciples were reminded, by this renewed miraculous capture, of their former call and consecration as* FISHERS OF MEN

Their Lord had put signal honour upon them; constituting them His companions, and apportioning for them a work of unparalleled magnitude, responsibility, and honour. But during an interval of time fraught with momentous consequences to the world, they had proved unworthy of their distinguished trust—they had become traitors to their Master—cowards in adversity. Might He not transfer the apostolate to others? How could He still confide to the trembling band that had cowered in terror when the Shepherd was smitten (one of their number basely denying Him)—how could He still confide to *them* a vast commission which, in the first hour when their heroism had been tested, they had basely trampled under foot? No! they had fainted and grown weary of *Him*—might He not justly have grown weary of *them?* But "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary. He giveth power to the faint; and to them who have no might He increaseth strength." The gospel-net is still to be entrusted to their hands. At *His* word myriads of immortal souls should, through their instrumentality, be enclosed in it. He would, moreover, comfort them with the assurance of His continual presence and blessing;—that, in the darkest night of their worldly or spiritual toil, they might think of a Great and Wise Provider—a wakeful eye of Heavenly love that would never suffer them to toil unowned and unrecompensed. While, on the one hand, He would seek them to feel their utter impotency without His presence and blessing, He would also assure them of the triumphant success which should follow, and must ever follow, His omnipotent word and prompt obedience to it;—that, being "stedfast, unmovable, always

abounding in the work of the Lord," their labour in the Lord should not be in vain!

III. Another truth this GENNESARET scene was designed to teach, is *the glorious and safe ingathering of the whole Church of God at the Resurrection morning.*

On the occasion of the former Miraculous Draught the nets had been *broken.* These nets, on that previous occasion, have been supposed by commentators, from the days of Augustine downwards, figuratively to represent the Church of God in its *present condition.* The boats, you will remember, when our Lord then spake to Peter, were still *out on the deep,* they were "*ready to sink,*"—the weight and struggles of the fish broke the meshes of the net, and many of the enclosed escaped into their old element. Fit type of the visible Church in its militant state,—still on the stormy sea, often threatening to sink, the net rent with unholy and unhappy divisions, enclosing indiscriminately both "bad and good"—believers and professors—saints and hypocrites—those having the form without the power of godliness, who are arrested for a season only to return once more to their sinful element.

But in this *second* miraculous enclosure all is different—the net is *not* dragged while the boats are still on the sea; —the fishermen are done with the sea of life, its storms and toils, and night-watchings; they have planted their own footsteps on the Heavenly shore, and brought their net along with them.

It is a lovely picture of THE RESURRECTION MORN, when all divisions and separations among Churches and Christians

shall be at an end;—when every fish in the sea of immortal being, "all the children of God scattered abroad," shall be gathered in. Notwithstanding the vast aggregate, not one shall be wanting. Over the unbroken net the glorified Redeemer will be able to repeat the declaration of His last intercessory prayer—"Those whom thou gavest me I have kept, and *none* of them is LOST." *

IV. Another object Christ had in view, in this morning feast and meeting, was *to demonstrate His own real and undoubted Humanity.*

He wished to convince the disciples that it was no shadowy apparition which, at that morning hour, saluted them and then vanished away. It was THE MAN CHRIST JESUS—the same Adorable Being who had been known to them oft before on these same shores in "the breaking of bread."

True it is, indeed, we are fully warranted in believing that His *bodily* form had undergone some mysterious change since the Resurrection. The term here employed is significant—"He *shewed* HIMSELF." "His body, after the Resurrection, was only visible by a distinct act of His will." † It is possible, too, there may have been some alteration in *feature;* perhaps the weary, toil-worn, wasted countenance of the Man of Sorrows,—those furrowed lines of deep woe, which had imprinted themselves on the disciples' latest memories in the Garden,—these may have been exchanged for an aspect of calm elevated joy, befitting the Risen Conqueror. But one thing

* For a full statement of Augustine's figurative exposition, see Mr Trench *in loco;* also Olshausen, vol. iv. p. 307, note.

† Chrysostom, quoted by Trench.

they could not mistake—*His heart of hearts was unchanged!* They would not wound Him by questioning His personal identity. This seems to be the meaning of the Evangelist's singular statement—"*None of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou?* KNOWING HIM TO BE THE LORD." They saw, perhaps, some external alteration (they must have done so, else why so slow to recognise Him as they were); but they knew Him from His words, His looks, His loving soul—they knew Him to be *the Lord.*

He Himself, by the most significant act, confirms the joyful assurance. He reveals Himself as *an unchanged Saviour.* Though risen and exalted, and with untold honours in prospect, He still condescends to lowly offices of love and mercy. He meets His fishermen-apostles in the chill damps of a spring morning on the Lake-shore. He who, before His decease, washed their feet, and "wiped them with the towel wherewith he was girded," has risen from the grave with the same loving heart which He ever had. He meets them at the frugal meal;—He prepares that meal with His own hands;—He partakes with them;—He calls the lowly guests His "CHILDREN!" He would proclaim, as His name and memorial to all generations—"Jesus in His life of humiliation—Jesus in His state of exaltation—Jesus risen—Jesus glorified—Jesus crucified—Jesus crowned—*is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever!*"

V. In this Feast, Jesus would seem to speak, by anticipation, of *a nobler and better festival He was then on His way to prepare for His Church in glory.*

After the night of toil, and the miraculous draught, came

the joyous Banquet. Glad must have been the surprise to these weary jaded men, after their discouraging labours, to find their Greatest and best Friend ready to welcome them on shore, with provided pledges of temporal and spiritual blessings. It told a joyous story of the future;—it forewarned, in the first instance, of a possible (nay a certain) night of discouragement—baffled labours—work impeded—souls uncaptured and unsaved. But all at once, in the hour of utter hopelessness, the Lord gives the word—the nets are lowered and filled—the elect are gathered in—the great gospel net with its priceless enclosures is brought safe to the Heavenly shore!

Better than all, JESUS IS THERE!—the world's long night-season is over—the eternal morning dawns, and the first sight which catches the eye of the triumphant and glorified Church is—HER GLORIFIED LORD. Faithful to His own promise, *He has come again to receive them unto Himself, that where He is there they may be also.* They who have faithfully and manfully toiled through the night of earthly disaster and discouragement, shall then "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob," in His Father's kingdom.

Let us rejoice in the prospect of this glorious meeting.—May we be among the number of those who "*love His appearing!*" Some of you may be out now amid the darkness of the earthly sea;—the lights in your earthly firmament may be dimmed;—one star after another, that cheered you over the waves, may be mysteriously extinguished. But soon shall day-break appear; and, standing on the Heavenly shores, in His own peerless ineffable love, Jesus will be waiting to greet you with the welcome—"ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD."

And finally, we must regard this whole scene as *an encouragement to devoted work in the Lord's service.*

That Feast was *the reward of labour.* Had there been no night of toil, no mutual invitations to "go a-fishing," that Holy Stranger would not have met them at day-dawn with so gracious a repast and so rich a blessing. "God is not unmindful of your work of faith, and your labour of love;" your services to His people and His cause shall not go unrecompensed by Him on the Great Day, when "He will give to every man according as his work has been." Each, remember, has His net of influence and responsibility; forbid that we should confront our Lord, at last, on the shores of eternity, with the woful confession—"My time is done, and my work is not done!"

But while there is a word of exhortation and encouragement to all, there seems to be a special one for Christ's own Servants—Ministers of the gospel—for the Apostles of Gennesaret, and the true "*Successors* of the Apostles"—successors in their faith and zeal, their self-sacrifice and devotion, who are "wise to win souls"—faithfully letting down the gospel net for the draught.

Their work is concluded. Their Lord himself is standing waiting to receive them at the everlasting Feast of His own presence and love.—The banquet is prepared—shall He issue the invitation, "*Come, all things are ready?*" Nay, something still is wanting! the Almighty Provider has yet some element of bliss to add, ere the feast is complete. "BRING," says He, "*of the fish that* YE *have caught!*"

Oh, wondrous thought! the faithful Servants of Christ—the "Fishers of men"—are told by their Lord, on that joyous

morn, to bring with them the immortal souls they have captured! Assembled at the heavenly feast—with the Saviour before them, and the white-robed band of immortals saved through their instrumentality, seated by His side—they shall be enabled, in Paul's burning words of triumph, to exclaim, "*What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not* YE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD JESUS?"

XXI.

The Testimony of Love.

Hark, my soul, it is the Lord!
It is thy Saviour, hear His word;
Jesus speaks, and speaks to thee,
Say, poor sinner, "Lov'st thou me?"

I deliver'd thee when bound,
Soothed thy sorrows, heal'd thy wound,
Loosed thy fetters, set thee free,
Say, poor sinner, "Lov'st thou me?"

* * * *

Thou shalt see my glory soon,
When the work of grace is done,
Partner of my throne to be,
Say, poor sinner, "Lov'st thou me?"

"So, when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."—John xxi. 15–17.

THE TESTIMONY OF LOVE.

THE Feast we considered in the preceding chapter is followed by a solemn and touching interview between the Lord and one of the Apostle-guests.

We can almost surmise, before the name is mentioned, which of the apostles it was. They had all been guilty of unkind desertion, when their sympathy would have been greatly valued; but *one*, who had been pre-eminent in professions of ardour, zeal, and devotedness, had proved, in the hour of trial, the first to fail. *Peter's* downfall had, indeed, been humiliating. We could not have wondered, if, covered with confusion at the thought of his recent treachery, and refusing ever again to meet the glance of his injured Master's eye, he had fled back in terror to Galilee, and hid himself, for very shame, in one of its most secluded hamlets.

But what will not the consciousness of devoted love brave and overcome? Never more convinced than now of attachment to that Lord he had deeply wounded, he is the first of all the seven to throw himself at His feet and implore His forgiveness. It were strange, too, had it been otherwise. A special message had been sent him by Mary Magdalene, which might well have brought burning tears to the eyes of one of sterner mould than he. "*Go*," said the angel-guardian at the sepulchre, "*go your way, tell his disciples*, AND PETER."

We may imagine the interview between this messenger of

reconciliation and the trembling Apostle on the Resurrection morning. When Mary rehearsed to him the angel's words, would he not, at first, listen to them as idle tales,—as a message too good to be true? 'What!' may he not have said to her, 'have you not mistaken the name? John or Andrew, James or Matthew, it may have been, but I am the last, surely, who would have been singled out with this special remembrance of a love I so basely requited.'* Yet it was all true. A new testimony that God's "thoughts are not as man's thoughts, and God's ways are not as man's ways!"

"AND PETER!" How these two little words would linger like undying music in his soul. How they would follow him every step in his way back to his native Galilee, haunt his sleeping and waking hours, and prove like a bright gleam in his lonely watches on the midnight sea!—And now, when He who dictated them is standing before him in peerless majesty in the morning light, can we wonder that, unable to repress the outburst of his grateful feelings, he is seen plunging into the water, cleaving the waves with his brawny arms that he might be the first to reach the shore!

The Feast, we found, was partaken of in solemn silence;—but when concluded, the Risen Lord is the first to speak, and PETER'S name is the first on His lips.

We have already explained the significant symbolism of the miraculous Draught, and of the Banquet which followed—how the Fishermen-apostles were addressed figuratively through the trade with which from youth they had been familiar—their nets being taken as typical of the Gospel Church, and the fish enclosed, of the living souls they were

* "Water from the Well-Spring," p. 65.

to capture. Our Lord now, however, changes the metaphor. He passes to one with which these Villagers of Bethsaida, amid the abounding green slopes and pasture-lands which bordered their lake, must have been equally familiar. Perhaps where they now were, a flock of sheep might have been seen browsing on one of the adjoining mountains: they may, at the moment, have attracted the eye of the true "Shepherd of Israel," as they emerged at that early hour from their nightly fold. Be this as it may, the old figure which David loved so well, when he sang of the Shepherd-love of God, is now taken by the GOOD SHEPHERD to instruct His own Disciple. The figure of *the net* spoke emphatically of the magnitude of the ministerial work—the vast and glorious ingathering of the family of God, which was to take place previous to the Heavenly Feast. Now He proceeds to unfold the principle or motive by which that work could alone be successfully prosecuted, and the method of attaining the great final recompense.

How does our Lord address the erring, but penitent, Apostle—"SIMON, SON OF JONAS."

Simon! He had surnamed him after his noble confession at the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, *Peter*, "the Rock."* But the Rock that should have manfully braved the storm had become the brittle reed, shattered by the first blast of temptation. His conduct had belied his loud protestations, and forfeited the nobler title. His Lord, therefore, goes back to the simple name of his old fisherman life—that which He employed on another occasion when the same disciple was tottering to a fall, "*Simon! Simon!* Satan hath desired to

* Matt. xvi. 18.

have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat."* Or again, when he was found slumbering at his post, instead of being, as he ought, the wakeful attendant and guardian of the Great Sufferer—"SIMON, why sleepest THOU?"†

And while there is a thrice-repeated *name*, there is also a thrice-repeated *question*, "LOVEST THOU ME?"

A knowledge of the original brings out tender touches of deep meaning in this remarkable passage, which are undiscerned in our English translation.‡ There are two entirely different words in the original Greek which are rendered in our Bibles by the word "*lovest*," (ἀγαπᾷς and φιλεῖς). The first time the question is asked by our Lord, it is the word ἀγαπᾷς which he uses—a word considered by exegetical writers to denote more a feeling of *general reverence* than any intense emotion of *personal* attachment. Peter, in his reply, employs a different term, (φιλῶ). His sensitive heart would, doubtless, be wounded to think that his Lord saw needful to employ what implied a less ardent affection. Therefore, he uses not the word which his Master had (that would inadequately express his real feelings); he takes the one indicative of earnest personal affection, and replies, "Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I LOVE Thee."

Jesus puts the question a *second* time. Still He refrains from reciprocating the expressed feeling of His disciple;—He does not yet adopt the term of intenser meaning—He would seem as if He wished still to caution, still to humble him;—to remind him of past ardent professions, and their signal failure;—and, therefore, once more He adheres to the less

* Luke xxii. 31. † Mark xiv. 37.

‡ See Notes in Alford and Trench *in loc.*

fervent word, when He repeats the appeal, *"Lovest thou me?"* Peter, however, will not abate the avowal of a deeper affection. Conscious of the reality of his love, he clings still to his former expression (φιλῶ), "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I LOVE thee."

And now his Great Master can resist no longer the ardent professions of His loving disciple. In putting the question for the *third* time, He changes his former word—He adopts the higher standard, and interrogates as to the existence of that deep *personal* love, of which the apostle, in his future life, gave such signal and manifold proof.

There can be no doubt as to the Lord's intention in the thrice-repeated question. He wished, by reminding of the *threefold denial*, to convey to His servant a gentle *threefold rebuke*. He could not have done so more impressively; while in the addition He makes to the first query, "Lovest thou me *more than these?*" there is an equally manifest reference to that occasion when, in a self-sufficient boastful comparison of his own moral heroism with that of his fellow-disciples, Peter had said, "Though all should be offended because of thee this night, yet will not I."*

Simon heard the first two questions unmoved; but when for the *third* time it was uttered—implying, as it did, a secret mistrust as to his sincerity, and reminding with such marked significance of his threefold sin—the questioned apostle "was *grieved*." He began to suspect there must be some good reason for these implied doubts. He knew that the loving heart which so interrogated would not unnecessarily wound him; that his gracious Lord would not utter a

* Mark xiv. 29.

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY

needlessly unkind word or question. Could it be that He, who knew all things, might see foreshadowed some future denial, which led Him to receive these ardent protestations with such significant caution? Could it be that his heart, which had so deceived him in the past, was to prove a traitor-heart again, and that he would have to renew his bitter weeping over the humiliations of a still sadder fall?

It was, however, the very grief his Lord desired. He wished to humble him, to annihilate his self-confidence and self-sufficiency. He would teach him that the very love he was tempted to boast of was not an innate, self-generated principle, but, like all his other gifts, divinely imparted and nurtured. He would lead him in future to be ever drawing supplies, not from his own frames and feelings, which were fitful as the changing sand, or apt to fail as the summer brook, but from the exhaustless fountain-head, *God Himself!*

That our Lord's reiterated appeal had the intended effect we cannot doubt. It read a lesson the Apostle never forgot till his dying hour. We may regard this interview, indeed, as a crisis in Peter's history—the date of a new development in his inner life. The proud self-sufficient Disciple becomes from this day onwards a little Child. He comes forth from the furnace into which his Lord had cast him purified as gold—*humbled, but really exalted.* We see in his very reply to the present threefold question the germ of this new grace of future poverty of spirit. His answer in former times would probably have been, "I know that I love thee." But Jesus has taught him a different estimate of himself. He appeals from his own truant, untrustworthy heart, to that of the great Heart-searcher, "Lord, thou knowest

all things; thou knowest that I love thee."* His Lord had asked him as to the relative intensity of his love, whether it was now according to his former boasting estimate of it—"*more than these.*" The humbled Apostle takes no note of the comparison. His silence is its own interpreter. There was once a time when he would have been arrogant enough to say, "Yea, Lord; none can love thee as I do." But the memories of the past, and the rebukes of the present, have seated him in the dust. He can only make the confident appeal to Him who knew the heart, as to the sincerity of present resolutions, and the depth of present attachment. "I am done," he seems to say, "judging others—I am done judging myself. I once imagined I was bold enough to walk with undaunted step the raging water; but faith failed, and I began to sink. I once drew my sword, with what I thought a hero-heart, against an armed band; the next hour I was a coward trembling with guilty fear. I once said I was ready to go to prison and to death, and that though all should deny and grow faithless, I should never be one of them. Yet, I was the first to be ashamed of that Lord to whom I had sworn unswerving allegiance, and my sin was blackened with aggravations I shudder to recall. Now, I dare boast no more. I can say nothing as to the dependence to be placed on my devotedness. Fitful in the past, it may be fitful still, but at present, Lord, it is with no sembled lips that I declare, with Thy scrutinising glance upon me, 'THOU *knowest that I* LOVE *thee.*'"

Jesus forthwith proceeds to reinstate him in the Apostolic office, which, by his unworthy conduct, he had for the time

* See Maurice on St John.

forfeited. Anew he affixes the seal on his previous high commission, "*Feed my lambs*"—"*Feed my sheep.*"*

His Lord had listened to his protestations of love. He accepts them; and in token of acceptance He tells His disciple to go and act a Shepherd's part to his purchased flock. His words are equivalent to saying, "Simon, if you indeed love me, make proof of the reality of your love, not by your words but by your acts. Prove by newly baptized zeal and unremitting labour that I have not unworthily confided in your resolute assertions."

And in this, Jesus would proclaim to His Church in every future age, that the grand qualification for the feeding of the Sheep is the love of the Great Shepherd in the heart of the under Shepherds. Nothing can be done acceptably but what proceeds from this paramount Christian motive—LOVE TO CHRIST. Peter could not fail, surely, at this moment peculiarly to feel its constraining influence. He was standing within the shadow of the Cross and the Tomb—that blended

* There is a variety, similar to what we have noted above, in the words rendered, "Feed" and "Sheep," in our English translation. In either case, in the original there are two distinct words, Βόσκε and Ποίμαινε, προβάτα and προβάτια. We quote Mr Alford's note on the subject :—

"We can hardly, with any deep insight into the text, hold βόσκειν and ποίμαινειν to be synonymous, or ἀρνία πρόβατα and προβάτια. The sayings of the Lord have not surely been so carelessly reported as this would assume. Everything here speaks for a *gradation* of meaning. The variety of reading certainly makes it difficult to point out exactly the steps of that gradation, and unnecessary to follow the various interpreters in their assignment of them, but that there *is such* may be seen from Isa. xl. 11; 1 John ii. 12, 13. Perhaps the *feeding of the lambs* was the furnishing the apostolic testimony of the resurrection and facts of the Lord's life on earth to the first converts; the *shepherding* or ruling *the sheep*, the subsequent government of the Church, as shewn forth in the early part of the Acts; the *feeding of the* προβάτια, the choicest, the loved of the flock, the furnishing the now maturer Church of Christ with the wholesome food of the doctrine contained in his Epistles."

memory of love and anguish was fresh on his soul;—the hand that had just broken the bread still bore upon it the print of the nails. Formerly he loved his Lord as a Heavenly *Friend*—now he loves Him as a gracious *Saviour*. Formerly he could say with Paul, "Who *loved* me"—now he can add, "Who *gave* HIMSELF for me!"

It is the same paramount gospel claim which is, or ought to be, all-powerful, as an incentive for duty and action with ourselves. We have all the *old* claims of God's love remaining in undiminished and unaltered power:—God our Creator; God our Preserver; God our Bountiful Benefactor; but to these is superadded the culminating claim of all—*God our* REDEEMER! If you wish to learn the secret of obedience—of active service or passive suffering—come and seat yourselves at Calvary's Cross—listen to the thrilling words—the pathetic appeal coming from these dying lips: "*All this I have done for* THEE;—What doest *thou* for ME?" Or, as this has been translated by one who knew well the sovereign power of that love—"*Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are his.*" Depend upon it, nothing will nerve the soul for high, and holy, and pure, and self-sacrificing deeds, but this great principle—"*The love of Christ constraineth me!*" Sinai, with its thunders, says, "Thou SHALT love God." But Calvary says, "*We love him, because he first loved us!*"

How stands our love to that Great and Gracious Redeemer? Were He to prompt the question at this hour, "*Lovest thou me?*"—could we reply in honest earnestness, "*Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.*"

Perhaps some who read these pages may be *Backsliders.* Like Peter, you may have forsaken your first love. You may have become as bruised reeds and smoking flax. You may think that return is hopeless to that Saviour, whose grace you have despised, and whose loving heart you have so grievously wounded. Look for your encouragement to Peter's gracious reception by his Lord on these shores of Tiberias. Had he obeyed, perhaps, his own first impulses, he would have fled affrighted from that Presence, and eluded a withering glance he felt he dared not brook. Ah! if ever there was one who might have been spurned away, it was that poor despicable waverer in Pilate's judgment hall, who, with oaths and curses, denied the Lord that bought him. But Jesus sent a special message of love to *him,* as he does to *us.* And what was the Penitent's resolve? It was to cast himself imploringly at his Master's feet, and seek that loving mercy he had never yet sought in vain! As the little child cannot close his eyes in sleep, until he has received his father's forgiveness; so this erring Apostle feels that joy must be a stranger in his heart, until he receive from his Lord's own lips the cheering assurance that the past is all pardoned—that his crimson and scarlet sins are buried in the depths of forgetfulness!

And Jesus not only receives him, but even in rebuking him, what tenderness, what unutterable gentleness is mingled with that rebuke! We quite expect, after so black a catalogue of guilt, a reprimand of corresponding severity. When the words are first uttered—"*Simon, son of Jonas*"—we expect to hear the enumeration of his bygone sins—his arrogance—his presumption—the oaths and curses and cowardly

desertion. But we see "the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." He knew well that that wounded spirit did not require to be needlessly lacerated. There is no direct reference, therefore, to the past—no catalogue of former errors dragged afresh to the light of day. Like the Shepherd in the parable of the lost wanderer, in silent love "he lays him on his shoulders rejoicing," saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the sheep which was lost!"

Reader! are you overwhelmed at the thought of some past sins—some deep dark blots disturbing your peace, and darkening your spiritual prospects—deterring you from the mercy-seat—leading you to restrain prayer before God? Delay no longer fleeing to that same unchanging Lord of love. He is waiting now to be as gracious as He was to the penitent Apostle at GENNESARET. He is as willing now as then to say, "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness; your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more."

And learn once more from this subject, that it is *by Grace you stand.*

Why was Peter not a Judas? Why do we not find him, like his brother apostle, a vessel (once freighted with noble resolves) lying a wreck on the desert shore? It was *grace* which made all the difference. Grace called him—grace restrained him—grace rescued him. He was a comment on the words, "*kept by the power of God.*" Jesus Himself tells, that at one time there was verily but a step between Peter and death. There was but *one* link that prevented the chain of his spiritual life from snapping, but it was the *golden*

link of His own ever-living intercession ;—" Satan hath desired to have thee, * * BUT I *have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not!*"

It is the same with us. We can boast of no grace we have. We are dependent every hour on the upholding arm of a gracious Saviour. That arm removed, and we sink like lead in the waters. Distrust yourselves. Feel that your own strength is utter weakness. Let your cry be, " More grace! more grace!"—ever travelling between your own emptiness and Christ's infinite fulness.

And with His grace *sustaining* you, seek to have His love *constraining* you. Seek to have more and more a realising sense of the paramount claims of that amazing mercy! Seat yourselves often under Calvary, and gaze on Him who spared not His own life's blood, that He might rescue you from the waves of destruction, and spread for you a Feast on the Heavenly shore. Oh! with such a miracle of stupendous condescension in view, can we wonder that He should ask, regarding all else that may be competing with His paramount claims—money—wealth—friends—home—children —" *Lovest thou me* MORE THAN THESE?" Give Him henceforth the throne of your best affections, and be able to say in the spirit of the old martyr, " If I had a thousand hearts, I could love Him with them all. If I had a thousand lives, I would lay them down for His sake!"

XXII.

The Farewell.

Lord! no guardian to defend me
In the world I have like Thee;
None so willing to befriend me:
Thou art all in all to me!

What is life? a scene of troubles
Following swiftly one by one;
Phantom visions—airy bubbles,
Which appear, and then are gone.

What at best the world's vain fashion?
Quickly it must pass away;
Vexing care and whirlwind passion,
Surging like the angry spray.

One brief moment, Lord, may sever
All that earth can friendship call;
But *Thy* friendship is for ever—
It outlives the wreck of all.

"Then the eleven disciples went away into GALILEE, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."—MATT. xxviii. 16-20; 1 COR. xv. 6.

THE FAREWELL.

We have now reached the last of Gennesaret's Sacred Memories. The time has come when the Saviour is to take a final farewell of its shores.

In the two previous chapters, we found Him by the Lake side, holding, in a quiet morning hour, a private and confidential meeting with His Apostles. A more numerous gathering is now appointed, that He may publicly bid adieu to the many devoted disciples scattered throughout *Galilee*, among whom He had longest lived and laboured.

The place of assemblage was "a mountain," most probably *the Mount of Beatitudes*—the spot hallowed by former burning words of warning and mercy, and which more than any other overlooked the scenes of His ministry and miracle. We have every reason, moreover, to believe that this was the same memorable Convocation to which St Paul refers * when he speaks of Christ having been "seen by five hundred brethren at once"—the greater part of whom were still alive when he wrote, though a few had "fallen asleep." †

* 1 Cor. xv. 6.

† A strong presumptive proof that the meeting of these five hundred brethren must have taken place on this mountain in Galilee, is the express mention made in Acts i. 15, that after the ascension, the total number of the disciples in *Judea* was one hundred and twenty. That more than the eleven disciples were present is also evident from the incredulity referred to by St Matthew, "And some doubted." "This," as Dr Robinson well observes, "could hardly be supposed to be true of any of the eleven, after what had already happened to

As Jesus afterwards, on the summit of OLIVET, took farewell of the scenes of His ministry in *Judea*, so now, in presence of a larger throng, he closes His ministry in GALILEE, and upon the shores of its honoured Sea.

The Roman Hero of old, at the close of his victorious campaign, was wont to address his soldiers before being conducted to the Capitol to be crowned. The Prince of the Kings of the Earth, ere ascending the Hill of God, to receive the reward of His triumphs, assembles together His faithful followers, to convey to them words of encouragement and directions for duty, when His own visible presence would be withdrawn. As the Great High Priest of His Church, He had recently entered within the veil with the offering of His own blood. Now, the curtain being rent, He, the true Aaron, comes forth to pour His benediction on the waiting people; or, like a fond father, who, ere he sets forth to a distant clime, gathers his family around him, to breathe upon them farewell accents of comfort and peace.

The Evangelists give us no particulars regarding the interesting transaction here referred to. It is but the dim outline of a picture which we long to have filled in. May we not, however, so far venture to realise it? With the local Scene we are already familiar. Few hamlets would there be on the Lake that would not probably send a believing delegate to the solemn assembly. Conspicuous among the band of five hundred, would there not be the *Centurion of Capernaum*, with his restored servant—The *Leper*, now purged of his

them in Jerusalem and Galilee, and after having been appointed to meet their risen Lord at this very time and place."—*Harmony of the Gospels*, p. 192.

uncleanness, no longer an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, but a fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of God—The *Widow of Nain,* with the tear of gratitude in her eye, as she first gazed on a restored son at her side, and then upon the face of the Great Restorer—The *Paralytic,* standing upright, with vigorous limb and gleaming eye—The *Maniac of Gadara,* now the calm and loving believer—*Jairus,* too, with the living trophy of redeeming power leaning gently on his arm—*Mary of Magdala, Joanna,* and *Susanna,* no longer ashamed to mingle in the same group with another (once outcast) sister, who had testified, at their common Master's feet, by tears of anguish, the depth and intensity of her sorrow and love?

If we could have wished an ampler description of the Scene and its Convocation, still more could we have desired that the memorable farewell address of the Great Redeemer had been fully given to us. It has, however, for wise reasons been withheld. All that is recorded is the briefest of outlines; but that outline is, nevertheless, precious and significant. It embraces *three statements,* to each of which we would now invite attention.

Conscious that for the last time they were standing in the presence of their Divine Master, the multitude would doubtless listen in breathless silence as they heard the farewell tones of the Voice they loved so well. Let it be with something of the same feelings that, in this closing chapter, we gather in thought around the feet of Jesus, and hear the parting word He has to say unto our souls!

The *three* recorded assertions of our Lord consist of—

I. A PARTING ASSURANCE.
II. A PARTING COMMISSION.
III. A PARTING PROMISE.

I. There is A PARTING ASSURANCE—"*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*"

What more precious farewell truth, what more blessed *Keepsake*, could the Saviour have confided to these waiting hundreds, than this—that to Him has been committed the Sceptre of universal Empire! Many *there* had witnessed His poverty, His humiliation, His cruel buffetings, His bitter death. But now these were all past. His head was about to be "crowned with many crowns." As King and Head of His Church, "*All things had been delivered to him of his Father.*"* He knew that "*the Father had given all things into his hands.*"† He would impart the comfort of this ennobling truth to the orphaned Church He was to leave behind Him;—when the chariots of God had borne Him away from their sight, they could still think of the CHRIST OF GALILEE as boundless in His resources; that He who so often had spoken to them "in righteousness," was still "*mighty to save*"—"The Prince who had power with God," and must "prevail"—"the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the MIGHTY GOD."

This "prophecy" was of no "private interpretation," intended merely for the ears of this mountain auditory. These five hundred formed the representatives of the Church of Christ in every age;—whatever truths were soothing

* Matt. xi. 27. † John xiii. 3.

and consolatory to *them*, may be equally so to us. And who will not exult in the glorious assurance, that to these very hands, that were pierced on *Calvary's Cross*, has been confided the Sovereignty of the Universe?

John, sixty years later, beheld in striking vision, in Patmos, a book or roll "sealed with seven seals." Tears came to the aged eyes of the Evangelist, because no one in heaven or in earth was found "worthy to take the book" and unloose its mysteries. All at once, one of the Redeemed from the earth conveys to him the joyous assurance, that he need no longer "*weep*," for the "Lion of the tribe of Judah had prevailed to open the book" and unloose its mystic seals. What was this, but the announcement in significant figure of the Saviour's own last utterance, that He has had committed to His keeping the roll of *Providence;* —that roll in which is inscribed not only the fate of kingdoms, the destinies of nations—but all that concerns the humblest and lowliest member of His Church on earth;— with *Him* rests the unfolding of the roll—the breaking of the seals—the pouring out of the vials—the bursting of the thunders. Need we wonder that in taking "the book" into his hands, the ransomed myriads in the Apocalyptic vision should be seen falling down at the feet of THE LAMB, with their harps and golden vials full of odours; and, exulting in the thought that the *Great Ruler of all* was a Brother of the human race, they should attune their lips to the lofty ascription, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, FOR *Thou wast slain*, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation!"

Yes, I repeat, who will not exult in the thought, that this vast world of ours is committed to the rule of JESUS—that it was "created *by* Him," that it was created "*for* Him," that "by him *all things consist?*" I look up to the spangled dome of Heaven with its myriad constellations. I am told these lamps, hung in the sky, are burning incense-fires to His glory—that they march at *His* word, and their eternal music is an anthem to His praise. I look to the landscape beneath;—all that vast furniture in the Palace of Nature is His providing. It is He who covers it in its robe of light, who wreathes the brow of Spring in living green, and decks the valleys in Summer glory. Not a breeze murmurs through the forest, nor a dew-drop sparkles on its leaves, the sun shoots not one golden arrow through its glades, but by His permission. It is He who pencils the flower, and intones the thunder, and gives voice to the tempest, and wings to the lightning.

But these manifestations of His power in nature are subordinate to a nobler sovereignty with which He is invested in the moral and spiritual world. *There*, too, nothing can happen but by *His* direction, nothing can befal us but what is the dictate and result of His loving wisdom. Often, indeed, that wisdom and love are veiled behind gigantic clouds of permitted evil. "*Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself*"—"*Thy judgments are a great deep*"—is often all the explanation which our finite minds can offer. But when we remember the pledge, in His own life's blood, which He has Himself given of His love to His people, dare we impugn the rectitude of His dealings, or arraign the wisdom of His ways? Nay;—This Saviour-God reigneth, "let the earth be

glad." From the heart stripped of its loved gourd by the gentle hand of death, to the more terrible cry of perishing thousands in a revolted empire or beleaguered capital—what truth more sublime, what syllables fall with more soothing music on the soul than these—"HE" (the Saviour who *died* for me, who now *lives* for me) "*doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth!*"

Conscious that the Lord hath set Him as "King on His holy hill of Zion," we may well take up that triumphant Psalm, which to hundreds of bleeding hearts will ever have a memorable significance,—that Psalm which speaks pre-eminently of the ascension glories of a reigning Redeemer. In one of the world's very darkest hours, when the last vestige of the footsteps of a God of Love seemed obliterated—when, man-forsaken and God-forsaken, the hapless innocents were about to go down into darkness, tempted to cry out in frantic unbelief, "*Is there a God on the earth?*" the glorious truth of the text was made to fringe the edges of the looming cloud—a blood-stained leaf floating on the crimson deluge pointed to the *all-power* of *Jesus* as the alone sheet-anchor in the maddening storm.* "*The Lord has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to our God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. God reigneth over the heathen; God sitteth on*

* Of that frightful Aceldama—the massacre at Cawnpore—an officer in General Havelock's noble band thus writes:—"I picked up a mutilated Prayer Book. It had lost the cover. It appeared to me to have been opened at p. 36 in the Litany, where I have little doubt but these poor creatures sought and found consolation in those beautiful supplications. It is here sprinkled with blood. The book has lost some pages at the end, *and terminates with the 47th Psalm, in which David thanks the Almighty for his signal victories over his enemies.*"

the throne of his holiness. The shields of the earth belong unto our God: he is greatly exalted." *

II. We have here A PARTING COMMISSION.

"Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

Appropriate seemed the spot where Jesus now stood to issue this great commission. It was on the frontier land of Judea—*"Galilee of the Gentiles"*—almost within sight of Heathendom.

At an earlier period of His public ministry the command had been very different—*"Go* NOT *into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* † A new dispensation, however, with the rending of the old temple veil, had now dawned on the world;—the brotherhood of the human family was boldly announced; the leaves of the tree of life were no longer to be for the healing of Judea, but for "the healing of *the nations.*"

The announcement of Christ's investiture with *"all power"* is beautifully connected with this missionary injunction—*"All power,"* says He, *"is given to me,"* THEREFORE, *"go ye and teach all nations"*—as if the first use He would make of this Mediatorial rule and sovereignty was to break down the barriers that had so long separated race from race, and make the waters of salvation roll round the globe, and, like its own oceans, touch every shore. Set as King in the citadel

* Psalm xlvii. 5, 6, 8, 9. † Matt. x. 5, 6.

of Zion, He had examined its armoury, inspected its treasures, and the first use He makes of these is to panoply His Disciples, and send them forth as the conquerors of the world.

What a startling commission! what a gigantic undertaking! Had the wise of this world been of the listening throng on that Galilee mountain, how would they have laughed it to scorn! What! that handful of Galilean boors and fishermen to go forth on the conquest of the human race—men devoid of learning, polish, worldly tact, worldly wisdom, to proclaim a lowly Jew, who lived a lowly life and died an ignominious death, Lord of all! To undertake, moreover, to wage war with lust, and passion, and self in every shape—to proclaim that there was sin against high Heaven, not in the word and deed only, but in the secret thought of revenge, the rising passion, the unclean look;—to hurl the venerated systems of ages from their thrones—to dethrone JUPITER from the *Capitol*, MINERVA from the *Acropolis*, and erect in their place the pure, self-denying doctrines of the Cross, and the worship of a God Invisible! It seemed the ravings of childish enthusiasm, the boldness of ignorant and infatuated dreamers. And what were to be their weapons? The battle of the world's warriors is "with confused noise and garments rolled in blood." The secret of Mohammedan triumph was the power of the sword. But the commission is not "go and *subdue*," "go and *conquer*"—but go and *teach*, go "*make disciples.*"* It was to be a *moral* victory over Mind, Conscience, Will, a debased Nature, grovelling Passions. It was by a few scrolls written by Hebrew prophets, and Jewish fishermen and publicans, that the world was to be "turned upside down."

* Μαθητέυσατε.

The unlettered listeners, with nothing but the simple sling of faith and the smooth pebbles from the brook of eternal Truth, were to go forth on their apparently hopeless undertaking!

If those localities are sacred in the world which are associated with the first plannings and conception of a great enterprise, where originated some grand thought or purpose which has had a powerful influence for good on mankind; —if that spot is memorable where Columbus first dreamed of his unknown western world—or where Newton sat under his garden-bough and grasped the law which moulds the raindrop and gives the planet its pathway—or the library where Luther found the dusty volume which gave birth to the Reformation, and emancipated the human mind from the despotism of ages;—how illustrious and hallowed surely must ever be that mountain-scene in Galilee where the Jew listened with startled ears to the strange command, that "Repentance and remission of sins" were now to be preached, in the name of Jesus, "*to all nations*"—that henceforth there was to be "neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free" —that the Angel of the Jewish Church had now folded his wings, and that "another Angel" was about to "fly in the midst of Heaven, having the Everlasting *Gospel*, to preach *to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.*" *

What a sacred trust was here confided to *us!* Woe betide that Church which neglects so hallowed a bequest, and selfishly appropriates its spiritual blessings without one effort to convey them to others.

If farewell words are ever solemn and binding ones, let

* Rev. xiv. 6.

the Church of Christ come to this Mountain of Galilee, and listen to the parting command and injunction of her Great Lord. Striking surely, and significant it was, that, ere He ascended, one of His last farewell looks should have been turned towards the nations yet sitting in darkness; that His last utterances were burdened with a solemn charge to the Church of the future to "go far hence unto the Gentiles." The wailing cry of unhappy Heathendom was doubtless, at that moment, borne to His ear from all coming ages. The wild shriek that has risen in our own age may have mingled in the terrible appeal. Well *He* knew that nothing would tame savage hearts but the regenerating power of His own blessed Gospel; and, therefore, ere He bids the world farewell, and suffers the chariot-cloud to descend, he utters, with heathen mountain-peaks in view, and half heathen villages at his feet, the ever-memorable command, "*Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*"

III. We have, finally, THE PARTING PROMISE.

The Saviour's discourse is drawing to a close; a few more utterances and He will vanish from sight never again to be seen by His Church on earth, till the Great Day of His appearing.

Sorrow was doubtless filling their hearts at the thought of His departure, when the most sacred and joyous of friendships seemed about to be dissolved for ever. But by one glorious *promise* He turns their sorrow into joy,—"I go," He seems to say, "and yet *I* will *never* leave you. These heavens are about to receive me, but though my personal presence be

withdrawn,—though this Risen Body is soon to be screened from view behind the veiled glories of the Holiest of all, think not in reality my Presence is gone, '*Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*'"

There is a beautiful connexion and contrast between the first and the last assertions of this farewell discourse. The assertion of His unlimited sovereign Dominion was a cheering and gladdening one. It was the announcement that the garnered riches of the Universe were in His possession, and that all these would be used in behalf of His people. He seems in it to take the *telescope* and sweep the boundless firmament of His power, proclaiming His kingdom to be an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion enduring throughout all generations. But now is the *telescope* laid aside, and the *microscope* is turned to every atom of redeemed dust! He leaves the symbols of His might in the Heavens above,—His regal sway over "thrones, dominions, principalities, powers,"—and turning to each one individual member of His Church on earth, the feeblest, the poorest, the lowliest, the most desolate,—He says, *Lo! I am with* YOU *alway, even unto the end of the world!* The splendours of His mediatorial throne were at that moment in view. The harps of Heaven were sounding in His ear. But He assures them, when standing on the very threshold of all this glory, that His heart of love would still continue with the Pilgrim Church He was to leave in a Pilgrim World. "*All power is given to me in Heaven;*" YET, "*Lo! I am with* YOU!"

That farewell saying has lost none of its comfort. "YOU,"—that little word embraced every one of *us!*—YOU,—Jesus looked down the vista of eighteen centuries, His eye,

perhaps, was on some lone spirit now reading these pages who thinks he has been left to the mercy of the storm, and still He says, "O thou of little faith, wherefore art thou cast down?—dry thy tears, dispel thy misgivings, '*Lo! I am with* YOU!'"

Yes, Blessed assurance amid much that is changing here! Heart and flesh do faint and fail! Often our cisterns are scarcely filled when they break in pieces—our suns have scarce climbed the meridian when they set in weeping clouds;—our fondest schemes are blown upon—our most cherished gourds withered. We seat ourselves in our homes, but there are blanks there—vacant seats tell the too truthful tale of severed links, and blighted hopes, and early graves. As age creeps on, we look around us, but the companions of our pilgrimage are gone—noble forest trees, one by one, have bowed to the axe; "the place that once knew them, knows them no more." BUT there is ONE surviving the wreck and ruin of all sublunary joys, changeless among the changeable—"*Lo! I am with you*"—and "the wilderness and the solitary place" are by that presence made *glad!*

Amid sacred musings over departed friends—when visions of "the loved and lost" come flitting before us like shadows on the wall,—how often do we indulge the pleasing imagination of their still mingling with us in mysterious intercourse—their wings of light and smiles of love hovering over us; delighting to frequent with us hallowed haunts, and re-participate with our spirits in hallowed joys. This may perchance be but a fond delusion regarding others,—but it *is sublimely true regarding* JESUS! When the gates of the morning are opened, swifter than the arrowy light His footstep of love is at our threshold, and His voice is heard saying,

"*Lo! I am with you.*" When the glow of health has left our cheek, and the dim night-lamp casts its flickering gleam on our pillow, His unslumbering eye is watching us, and His lips gently whisper, "*Lo! I am with you.*" When the King of Terrors has entered our dwellings—when we are seated amid the awful stillness of the death chamber, gazing on the shroud which covers the hope of our hearts and the pride of our lives;—oh! amid that prostration of earthly hopes,—when unable to glance one thought on a dark future,—when the stricken spirit, like a wounded bird, lies struggling in the dust with broken wing and wailing cry—longing only for pinions to flee away from a weary world to the quiet rest of the grave;—in that hour of earthly desolation, He who has the Keys of death at His girdle—nay, who has tasted death Himself, and, better still, who hath *conquered* it—draws near in touching tenderness, saying, "*Lo! I am with you.*" *I* will come in the place of your loved ones. *I* am with you to cheer you, to comfort you, to support and sustain you. *I*, who once wept at a grave, am here to weep with you—*I* will be at your side in all that trying future—*I* will make my grace sufficient for you, and my promises precious to you, and my love better than all earthly affection. The one is changeable, *I* am unchangeable—the one must perish, *I* am the strength of your heart and your portion *for ever!*

Mark the word in this parting promise, "*Lo! I am with you* ALWAY." In the original it is more expressive; it means "All THE days"*—(all the *appointed* days). Our times are

πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας.

in the hands of Jesus—He counts not our years, but our DAYS—and He promises to be with us *every* day to the last day of all; and when that last day comes, He withdraws not His Presence but changes the Scene of it, and says, "TO-DAY *shalt thou be with Me in* PARADISE."

Reader! cleave to this glorious farewell promise. Rejoice in Christ's fidelity to it. Nature never belies *her* promises; we can calculate with unfailing accuracy on her unvarying sequences. The sun that sets to-day behind the western hills, will rise to-morrow. The trees which in the waning year are bared of their foliage, will be clothed with verdure in returning spring. The husbandman, casting his seed in the prepared furrow, sees afar off Autumn with her joyous sickle coming to bear the harvest treasure home.

And if the outer world be thus scrupulously truthful and unerring—"*He is faithful that promised,* I *will never leave you, nor forsake you.*" True, we *may* not, and *do* not, witness, in visible manifestation, the Saviour's power or presence. But as the mightiest agencies in nature *—gravitation, heat, electricity—are hidden and impalpable, yet constant in their influence, and stupendous in their effects; so it is with this ever-present Saviour. We see Him not—we hear not His voice—we cannot touch, like the believing suppliant of old, the hem of His outer garment. But it is the mission of *Faith* to rise above the impalpable and intangible, and to hold converse with the UNSEEN. The Believer, planting his footsteps on the Rock of Ages, can say with triumphant joy, "THE LORD LIVETH, and blessed be my

* Harris.

Rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted." Mounting with Paul on soaring pinions, he can challenge the Heavens above and the Earth beneath, legions of Angels and hosts of devils, ever to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus his Lord!

THE END.

58116

BT303
M3

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY